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SELECTIONS FROM DICKENS



SELECTIONS FROM DICKENS

WITH NOTES

BY

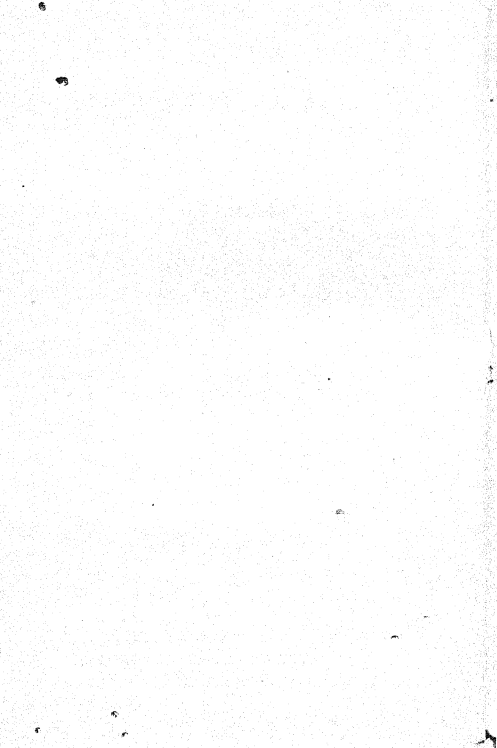
L. B. TILLARD, B.A.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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INTRODUCTION

CHARLES DICKENS was born on February 7, 1812, at Landport in Portsea. His father, John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, was brought by his duties to London in 1814, and two years later transferred to Chatham. There Charles Dickens spent five happy years of a childhood that was not otherwise too happy: there he first went to school, and there he learnt to love a small collection of books—amongst them “Roderick Random,” “Peregrine Pickle,” “Tom Jones,” “The Vicar of Wakefield,” and “Robinson Crusoe”—which first kindled his fancy. The change to London again in 1821 was a bitter experience to him, but worse was to come. His father became involved in financial troubles and young Charles was soon to be familiar with pawnbrokers’ shops, and the inside of the Marshalsea where his father was imprisoned for debt. Then for two years he worked in a blacking warehouse in Old Hungerford Stairs, and the bitter memory of these two years never deserted him. A fortunate disagreement between his parents and his employer took him from the warehouse back to school where he remained a few years, and does not seem to have learnt a great deal: in fact, as his father once said of him, “he may be said to have educated himself.” In the years 1827 and 1828 he served as a clerk in an attorney’s office, first in Lincoln’s Inn, and then in Gray’s Inn; leaving this employment he proceeded to learn shorthand, and in 1831 he became a reporter in the House of Commons, and three years later joined the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*. Much of what he did and suffered

in these early years is reproduced in his books, and even where he is not actually writing of himself he draws on these experiences in both his earlier and later books for characters and scenes with which by virtue of his keen powers of observation he had stocked his mind.

With the *Morning Chronicle* and its offshoot the *Evening Chronicle* are connected almost his earliest essays in literature, for, while his first work consisting of sketches of London life written under the name of Boz was published in the "Old Monthly Magazine," he contributed to these papers throughout the year 1835 a number of short articles which he subsequently collected and published as "Sketches by Boz." This early work though not unnaturally of unequal quality showed promise of the ~~easy~~ humour, the pathos, and the descriptive gifts which became a feature of his more mature genius. In the same year he was asked to write short articles in a monthly journal to illustrate the sporting plates of a humorous artist. Dickens held out for a wider choice of subject and a free hand and proposed that the illustrations should arise naturally from the text. Out of this scheme came the "Pickwick Papers" in 1836, and after the appearance of "Sam Weller" in the fifth number Dickens' position as a humorous writer was established; disappointments, personal troubles, difficulties, were, it is true, in store for him, but from that moment his position in the world of letters was assured. With the end of the session of 1836 Dickens' work as a reporter terminated, and all his time was now devoted to literature.

The next novel was "Oliver Twist," and in April, 1838, the first number of "Nicholas Nickleby" was published. Its success was immediate, and the appearance of each subsequent number was anticipated throughout the country with just as extraordinary a degree of interest as had been the case with the "Pickwick Papers." Two years later Dickens became editor of a weekly paper,

Master Humphrey's Clock, for which he wrote the "Old Curiosity Shop," and "Barnaby Rudge," commenced in 1840 and 1841 respectively. This method of writing involved certain difficulties. The times for publication followed quickly one upon another, each number was limited to a certain amount of space and yet had to produce an effect, and owing to the suddenness with which he undertook this work it was impossible to get in advance of the instalment presently due. In "Barnaby Rudge" Dickens made his first attempt to write of life and manners other than those of his own day. The plot underwent some modification whilst the novel was in progress, and is not too skilfully handled; but the descriptions of the Gordon Riots are ample compensation for this blemish of which indeed they had been the cause.

Dickens' reputation stood as high in America as in this country and there he had long been contemplating an American visit. In answer to pressing invitations by Washington Irving and others he sailed for America in the January of 1842. A stupendous welcome met him and his progress has been described as unequalled since that of Lafayette. At first Dickens was as pleased with America as America with Dickens. But these happy relations did not last very long. The question of international copyright was of great importance to Dickens who had suffered heavily from piracy, especially in America, and a speech made on this topic at Boston, though in accordance with the views held by the best American writers and newspapers, gave great offence, and called up outspoken comment. Dickens refused to retire from the ground he had taken up and claimed to give free expression to his opinions, whilst a certain section of the American press attributed his attitude to personal selfishness and greed.

Dickens was frankly disappointed with the Americans in many respects and his gifts of observation and satire

were not calculated to make him blind to their imperfections. They were certainly free from some things which they regarded as the worst flaws in English social institutions, and they had welcomed Dickens' work as a spirited protest against these very things; further they possessed among other excellent qualities which characterise a young nation freshness and vigour, they were not, however, devoid of blemishes and faults, some common to the world, some perhaps peculiar to themselves.

Dickens returned to England in May, 1842, and in the following October published his "American Notes," which recorded the impressions of his visit, and though not free from satire and criticism gave on the whole a faithful and amusing picture quite devoid of malice. But the Americans of that day were peculiarly sensitive to and resentful of criticism, and every mail brought Dickens challenges to make good the views expressed in his notes.

"Martin Chuzzlewit" had appeared in 1843, and the effect of these challenges was to make Dickens diverge from his original plot and introduce as a reply to his American critics Martin's adventures in America. "Martin Chuzzlewit" was not at the time as popular in this country as his earlier books, and on the other side of the Atlantic caused still greater resentment than ever. But the judgment of time has been to place "Martin Chuzzlewit" high among his masterpieces alike for his handling of character, his masterly descriptions and his irresistible humour.

"The Christmas Carol"—the first of a number of Christmas publications—appeared at the end of the same year, and gave Dickens a still warmer place in the affections of his readers. This is not surprising, for Dickens more than any English author has identified himself with the spirit of Christmas kindness and Christmas jollity.

Most of the years 1844 to 1848 Dickens spent abroad, in Italy, Switzerland, or Paris, and during this period wrote "Dombey and Son." He returned to England in

1847, and soon after set about writing "David Copperfield," which appeared in 1849. Of this book he wrote to his intimate friend and biographer John Forster:—"I seem to be sending a part of myself into the Shadowy World." This remark emphasises a remarkable trait of Dickens' genius; his characters were to him, as they have since been to so many of his admirers, real people and real friends. The remark is true in this further sense also that "David Copperfield" contained a certain amount of autobiography.

"Bleak House" appeared in 1853, and "Little Dorrit" two years later. In 1858 Dickens gave his first public Readings, and their immediate success evidenced not only the public's appreciation of his genius, but also its deep personal affection and respect for Dickens the man.

In 1859 Dickens published the "Tale of Two Cities" which, while deservedly popular, is perhaps least characteristic of his talents. Above all things character and humour had been the prominent feature of his earlier books, but this novel was one of incident; humorous writing is not much in evidence, but his descriptive powers appear at their highest. "Great Expectations" and "Our Mutual Friend" belong respectively to the years 1860 and 1864.

A second series of Readings had meanwhile been given, and in 1867 Dickens paid his second visit to America, where his Readings were thronged and proved a great financial success. But happier results than this, welcome as it was, flowed from this second visit, for Dickens found America changed for the better, and amid the enthusiasm with which the Readings were alike given and received the unfortunate differences of his first visit were finally composed. The strain of the Readings, however, affected Dickens' health, and though on his return outwardly nothing appeared to be wrong with him, in reality his strength was greatly impaired. He began, however, a

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fourth series of Readings in 1868, but was obliged to abandon them owing to illness in 1870. He had written a good deal of "Edwin Drood," but this was to be left unfinished: for this illness proved to be his last and he died on the 9th of June, 1870.

Whatever his literary faults may have been, Charles Dickens was undoubtedly the most popular writer of his day, and the years which have passed since his death have seen the verdict of his own generation upheld. Critics, it is true, have not been wanting to declare that alike in his humorous and descriptive writing he was often guilty of exaggeration. This suggestion of exaggeration is in some respects well founded; his tendency certainly was to endow his characters with one particular quality and to emphasise and develop this one quality till it overshadowed the numerous others which, if less prominent, are still to be found in every human being. His tendency in fact was to draw types, and so true was his drawing that the names of many of his characters, as representing types, have passed into the English language. To his purely literary gifts was added a noble and steadfast purpose in the cause of those whom he found oppressed and against the evils which he found around him. Mr. Forster relates a story transmitted to him by an American admirer of Dickens which well illustrates this purpose. In a valley among the mountains of Nevada a surveying party chanced upon a solitary squatter whose lonely hours were passed with "Nicholas Nickleby" and "Pickwick." "He had no Bible," adds the American, "and perhaps if he practised in his rude savage way all Dickens taught, he might less have felt the want even of that companion."

Dickens expressed a wish to be buried privately, and without ostentation. But in response to the unanimous desire of the nation a resting-place was found for him in Westminster Abbey near the spot where Chaucer lies and Shakespeare and Dryden.

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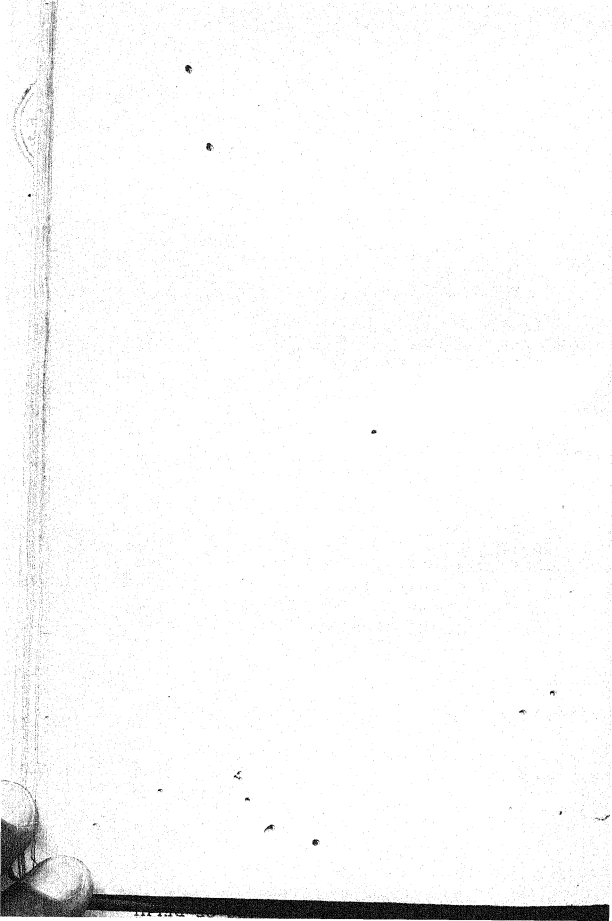
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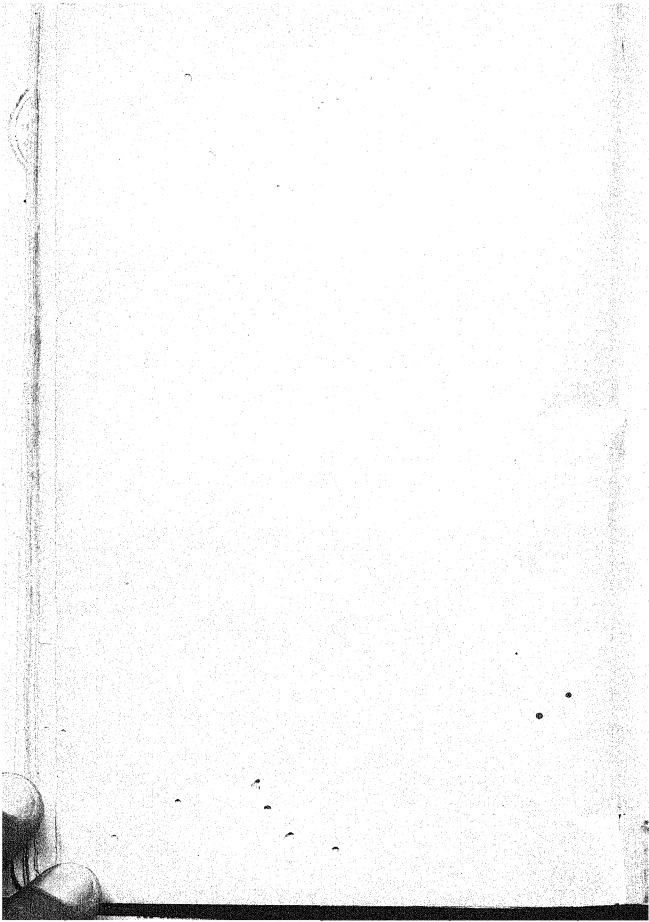
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SELECTIONS FROM DICKENS

SCENES FROM "DAVID COPPERFIELD"

DAVID COPPERFIELD GOES TO THROW HIMSELF ON
THE PROTECTION OF HIS AUNT, MISS BETSEY
TROTWOOD

I INQUIRED about my aunt among the boatmen first, and received various answers. One said she lived in the South Foreland Light, and had singed her whiskers by doing so; another, that she was made fast to the great buoy outside the harbour, and could only be visited at half-tide; a third, that she was locked up in Maidstone Jail for child-stealing; a fourth, that she was seen to mount a broom in the last high wind, and make direct for Calais. The fly-drivers, among whom I inquired next, were equally jocose and equally disrespectful; and the shopkeepers, not liking my appearance, generally replied, without hearing what I had to say, that they had got nothing for me. I felt more miserable and destitute than I had done at any period of my running away. My money was all gone, I had nothing left to dispose of; I was hungry, thirsty, and worn out; and seemed as distant from my end as if I had remained in London.

The morning had worn away in these inquiries, and I was sitting on the step of an empty shop at

a street corner, near the market-place, deliberating upon wandering towards those other places which had been mentioned, when a fly-driver, coming by with his carriage, dropped a horse-cloth. Something good-natured in the man's face, as I handed it up, encouraged me to ask him if he could tell me where Miss Trotwood lived; though I had asked the question so often, that it almost died upon my lips.

"Trotwood," said he. "Let me see. I know the name, too. Old lady?"

"Yes," I said, "rather."

"Pretty stiff in the back?" said he, making himself upright.

"Yes," I said. "I should think it very likely."

"Carries a bag?" said he—"bag with a good deal of room in it—is gruffish, and comes down upon you, sharp?"

My heart sank within me as I acknowledged the undoubted accuracy of this description.

"Why then, I tell you what," said he. "If you go up there," pointing with his whip towards the heights, "and keep right on till you come to some houses facing the sea, I think you'll hear of her. My opinion is she won't stand anything, so here's a penny for you."

I accepted the gift thankfully, and bought a loaf with it. Despatching this refreshment by the way, I went in the direction my friend had indicated, and walked on a good distance without coming to the houses he had mentioned. At length I saw some before me; and approaching them, went into a little shop (it was what we used to call a general shop, at home), and inquired if they could have the goodness to tell me where Miss Trotwood lived. I addressed myself to a man behind the counter, who was weighing

some rice for a young woman ; but the latter, taking the inquiry to herself, turned round quickly.

"My mistress ?" she said. "What do you want with her, boy ?"

"I want," I replied, "to speak to her, if you please."

"To beg of her, you mean," retorted the damsel.

"No," I said, "indeed." But suddenly remembering that in truth I came for no other purpose, I held my peace in confusion, and felt my face burn.

My aunt's handmaid, as I suppose she was from what she had said, put her rice in a little basket and walked out of the shop ; telling me that I could follow her, if I wanted to know where Miss Trotwood lived. I needed no second permission ; though I was by this time in such a state of consternation and agitation, that my legs shook under me. I followed the young woman, and we soon came to a very neat little cottage with cheerful bow-windows : in front of it, a small, square, gravelled court or garden full of flowers, carefully tended, and smelling deliciously.

"This is Miss Trotwood's," said the young woman. "Now you know ; and that's all I have got to say." With which words she hurried into the house, as if to shake off the responsibility of my appearance ; and left me standing at the garden-gate, looking disconsolately over the top of it towards the parlour-window, where a muslin curtain partly undrawn in the middle, a large, round, green screen or fan fastened on to the window-sill, a small table, and a great chair, suggested to me that my aunt might be at that moment seated in awful state.

My shoes were by this time in a woeful condition. The soles had shed themselves bit by bit, and the upper leathers had broken and burst until the very

shape and form of shoes had departed from them. My hat (which had served me for a night-cap, too) was so crushed and bent, that no old battered handleless saucepan on a dung-hill need have been ashamed to vie with it. My shirt and trousers, stained with heat, dew, grass, and the Kentish soil on which I had slept—and torn besides—might have frightened the birds from my aunt's garden, as I stood at the gate. My hair had known no comb or brush since I left London. My face, neck, and hands, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, were burnt to a berry-brown. From head to foot I was powdered, almost as white with chalk and dust, as if I had come out of a lime-kiln. In this plight, and with a strong consciousness of it, I waited to introduce myself to, and make my first impression on, my formidable aunt.

The unbroken stillness of the parlour-window leading me to infer, after awhile, that she was not there, I lifted up my eyes to the window above it, where I saw a florid, pleasant-looking gentleman, with a grey head, who shut up one eye in a grotesque manner, nodded his head at me several times, shook it at me as often, laughed, and went away.

I had been discomposed enough before ; but I was so much the more discomposed by this unexpected behaviour, that I was on the point of slinking off, to think how I'd best proceed, when there came out of the house a lady with a handkerchief tied over her cap, and a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, wearing a gardening pocket like a toll-man's apron, and carrying a great knife. I knew her immediately to be Miss Betsey, for she came stalking out of the house, exactly as my poor mother had so often described her stalking up our garden at Blunderstone Rookery.

"Go away!" said Miss Betsey, shaking her head and making a distant chop in the air with her knife. "Go along! No boys here!"

I watched her with my heart at my lips, as she marched to a corner of her garden, and stooped to dig up some little root there. Then, without a scrap of courage, but with a great deal of desperation, I went softly in and stood beside her, touching her with my finger.

"If you please, ma'am," I began.

She started, and looked up.

"If you please, aunt."

"En?" exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of amazement I have never heard approached.

"If you please, aunt, I am your nephew."

"Oh, Lord!" said my aunt, and sat flat down in the garden-path.

"I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk—where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey." Here my self-support gave way all at once; and with a movement of my hands intended to show her my ragged state, and call it to witness that I had suffered something, I broke into a passion of crying, which I suppose had been pent up within me all the week.

My aunt, with every sort of expression but wonder discharged from her countenance, sat on the gravel, staring at me, until I began to cry; when she got up in a great hurry, collared me, and took me into the

parlour. Her first proceeding there was to unlock a tall press, bring out several bottles, and pour some of the contents of each into my mouth. I think they must have been taken out at random, for I am sure I tasted aniseed water, anchovy sauce, and salad dressing. When she had administered these restoratives, as I was still quite hysterical, and unable to control my sobs, she put me on the sofa, with a shawl under my head, and the handkerchief from her own head under my feet, lest I should sully the cover; and then, sitting herself down behind the green fan or screen I have already mentioned, so that I could not see her face, ejaculated at intervals, "Mercy on us!" letting those exclamations off like minute guns.

After a time she rang the bell. "Janet," said my aunt, when her servant came in, "go upstairs, give my compliments to Mr. Dick, and say I wish to speak to him."

Janet looked a little surprised to see me lying stiffly on the sofa (I was afraid to move lest it should be displeasing to my aunt), but went on her errand. My aunt, with her hands behind her, walked up and down the room, until the gentleman who had squinted at me from the upper window came in laughing.

"Mr. Dick," said my aunt, "don't be a fool, because nobody can be more discreet than you can, when you choose. We all know that. So don't be a fool, whatever you are."

The gentleman was serious immediately, and looked at me, I thought, as if he would entreat me to say nothing about the window.

"Mr. Dick," said my aunt, "you have heard me mention David Copperfield? Now don't pretend not to have a memory, because you and I know better."

"David Copperfield?" said Mr. Dick, who did not appear to me to remember much about it. "*David Copperfield*? Oh yes, to be sure. David, certainly."

"Well," said my aunt, "this is his boy—his son. He would be as like his father as it's possible to be, if he was not so like his mother, too."

"His son?" said Mr. Dick. "David's son? Indeed!"

"Yes," pursued my aunt, "and he has done a pretty piece of business. He has run away. Ah! His sister, Betsey Trotwood, never would have run away." My aunt shook her head firmly, confident in the character and behaviour of the girl who never was born.

"Oh! you think she wouldn't have run away?" said Mr. Dick.

"Bless and save the man," exclaimed my aunt, sharply, "how he talks! Don't I know she wouldn't? She would have lived with her godmother, and we should have been devoted to one another. Where, in the name of wonder, should his sister, Betsey Trotwood, have run from, or to?"

"Nowhere," said Mr. Dick.

"Well then," returned my aunt, softened by the reply, "how can you pretend to be woolgathering, Dick, when you are as sharp as a surgeon's lancet? Now, here you see young David Copperfield, and the question I put to you is, what shall I do with him?"

"What shall you do with him?" said Mr. Dick, feebly, scratching his head. "Oh! do with him?"

"Yes," said my aunt, with a grave look and her forefinger held up. "Come! I want some very sound advice."

"Why, if I was you," said Mr. Dick, considering and looking vacantly at me, "I should——" The contemplation of me seemed to inspire him with a sudden idea, and he added, briskly, "I should wash him!"

"Janet," said my aunt, turning round with a quiet triumph, which I did not then understand, "Mr. Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath!"

Although I was deeply interested in this dialogue, I could not help observing my aunt, Mr. Dick, and Janet, while it was in progress, and completing a survey I had already been engaged in making of the room.

My aunt was a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking. There was an inflexibility in her face, in her voice, in her gait and carriage, amply sufficient to account for the effect she had made upon a gentle creature like my mother; but her features were rather handsome than otherwise, though unbending and austere. I particularly noticed that she had a very quick, bright eye. Her hair, which was gray, was arranged in two plain divisions, under what I believe would be called a mob-cap; I mean a cap, much more common then than now, with side-pieces fastening under the chin. Her dress was of a lavender colour, and perfectly neat; but scantily made, as if she desired to be as little encumbered as possible. I remember that I thought it, in form, more like a riding-habit with the superfluous skirt cut off, than anything else. She wore, at her side a gentleman's gold watch, if I might judge from its size and make, with an appropriate chain and seals; she had some linen at her throat not unlike a shirt-collar, and things at her wrists like little shirt wristbands.

Mr. Dick, as I have already said, was gray-headed and florid; I should have said all about him, in saying so, had not his head been curiously bowed—not by age; it reminded me of one of Mr. Creakle's boys' heads after a beating—and his gray eyes prominent and large, with a strange kind of watery brightness in them that made me, in combination with his vacant manner, his submission to my aunt, and his childish delight when she praised him, suspect him of being a little mad; though, if he were mad, how he came to be there puzzled me extremely. He was dressed like any other ordinary gentleman, in a loose gray morning coat and waistcoat, and white trousers; and had his watch in his fob, and his money in his pockets; which he rattled as if he were very proud of it.

Janet was a pretty, blooming girl, of about nineteen or twenty, and a perfect picture of neatness. Though I made no further observation of her at the moment, I may mention here what I did not discover until afterward, namely, that she was one of a series of protégées whom my aunt had taken into her service expressly to educate in a renouncement of mankind, and who had generally completed their abjuration by marrying the baker.

The room was as neat as Janet or my aunt. As I laid down my pen, a moment since, to think of it, the air from the sea came blowing in again, mixed with the perfume of the flowers; and I saw the old-fashioned furniture brightly rubbed and polished, my aunt's inviolable chair and table by the round green fan in the bow-window, the drugget-covered carpet, the cat, the kettle-holder, the two canaries, the old china, the punch-bowl full of dried rose leaves, the tall press guarding all sorts of bottles and pots, and,

wonderfully out of keeping with the rest, my dusty self upon the sofa, taking note of everything.

Janet had gone away to get the bath ready, when my aunt, to my great alarm, became in one moment rigid with indignation, and had hardly voice to cry out, "Janet! Donkeys!"

Upon which, Janet came running up the stairs as if the house were in flames, darted out on a little piece of green in front, and warned off two saddle-donkeys, lady-ridden, that had presumed to set hoof upon it; while my aunt, rushing out of the house, seized the bridle of a third animal laden with a bestriding child, turned him, led him forth from those sacred precincts, and boxed the ears of the unlucky urchin in attendance who had dared to profane that hallowed ground.

To this hour I don't know whether my aunt had any lawful right of way over that patch of green; but she had settled it in her own mind that she had, and it was all the same to her. The one great outrage of her life, demanding to be constantly avenged, was the passage of a donkey over that immaculate spot. In whatever occupation she was engaged, however interesting to her the conversation in which she was taking part, a donkey turned the current of her ideas in a moment, and she was upon him straight. Jugs of water, and watering pots, were kept in secret places ready to be discharged on the offending boys; sticks were laid in ambush behind the door; sallies were made at all hours; and incessant war prevailed. Perhaps this was an agreeable excitement to the donkey-boys; or perhaps the more sagacious of the donkeys, understanding how the case stood, delighted with constitutional obstinacy in coming that way. I only know that there were three alarms before the

bath was ready ; and that on the occasion of the last and most desperate of all, I saw my aunt engage, single-handed, with a sandy-headed lad of fifteen, and bump his sandy head against her own gate, before he seemed to comprehend what was the matter. These interruptions were the more ridiculous to me, because she was giving me broth out of a table-spoon at the time (having firmly persuaded herself that I was actually starving, and must receive nourishment at first in very small quantities), and, while my mouth was yet open to receive the spoon, she would put it back into the basin, cry, "Janet ! Donkeys !" and go out to the assault.

The bath was a great comfort. For I began to be sensible of acute pains in my limbs from lying out in the fields, and was now so tired and low that I could hardly keep myself awake for five minutes together. When I had bathed, they (I mean my aunt and Janet) enrobed me in a shirt and a pair of trousers belonging to Mr. Dick, and tied me up in two or three great shawls. What sort of bundle I looked like, I don't know, but I felt a very hot one. Feeling also very faint and drowsy, I soon lay down on the sofa again and fell asleep.

It might have been a dream, originating in the fancy which had occupied my mind so long, but I awoke with the impression that my aunt had come and bent over me, and had put my hair away from my face, and laid my head more comfortably, and had then stood looking at me. The words, "Pretty fellow," or "Poor fellow," seemed to be in my ears, too ; but certainly there was nothing else, when I awoke, to lead me to believe that they had been uttered by my aunt, who sat in the bow-window gazing at the sea from behind the green fan, which

was mounted on a kind of swivel, and turned any way.

We dined soon after I awoke, off a roast fowl and a pudding; I sitting at table, not unlike a trussed bird myself, and moving my arms with considerable difficulty. But as my aunt had swathed me up, I made no complaint of being inconvenienced. All this time, I was deeply anxious to know what she was going to do with me; but she took her dinner in profound silence, except when she occasionally fixed her eyes on me sitting opposite, and said, "Mercy upon us!" which did not by any means relieve my anxiety.

THE SHIPWRECK AT YARMOUTH

But as the night advanced, the clouds closing in and densely overspreading the whole sky, then very dark, it came on to blow harder and harder. It still increased, until our horses could scarcely face the wind. Many times, in the dark part of the night (it was then late in September, when the nights were not short), the leaders turned about, or came to a dead stop; and we were often in serious apprehension that the coach would be blown over. Sweeping gusts of rain came up before this storm, like showers of steel; and, at those times, when there was any shelter of trees or lee walls to be got, we were fain to stop, in a sheer impossibility of continuing the struggle.

When the day broke, it blew harder and harder. I had been in Yarmouth when the seamen said it blew great guns; but I had never known the like of this, or anything approaching to it. We came to Ipswich—very late, having had to fight every inch of ground since we were ten miles out of London—and found a cluster of people in the market-place, who

had risen from their beds in the night, fearful of falling chimneys. Some of these, congregating about the inn-yard while we changed horses, told us of great sheets of lead having been ripped off a high church tower, and flung into a by-street, which they then blocked up. Others had to tell of country people, coming in from neighbouring villages, who had seen great trees lying torn out of the earth, and whole ricks scattered about the roads and fields. Still, there was no abatement in the storm, but it blew harder.

As we struggled on, nearer and nearer to the sea, from which this mighty wind was blowing dead on shore, its force became more and more terrific. Long before we saw the sea, its spray was on our lips, and showered salt rain upon us. The water was out, over miles and miles of the flat country adjacent to Yarmouth; and every sheet and puddle lashed its banks, and had its stress of little breakers setting heavily towards us. When we came within sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were like glimpses of another shore with towers and buildings. When at last we got into the town, the people came out to their doors, all aslant, and with streaming hair, making a wonder of the mail that had come through such a night.

I put up at the old inn, and went down to look at the sea; staggering along the street, which was strewn with sand and sea-weed, and with flying blotches of sea-foam; afraid of falling slates and tiles; and holding by people I met, at angry corners. Coming near the beach, I saw, not only the boatmen, but half the people of the town, lurking behind buildings; some now and then braving the fury of the storm to look away to sea, and blown sheer out of their course in trying to get zigzag back.

Joining these groups, I found bewailing women whose husbands were away in herring or oyster boats which there was too much reason to think might have foundered before they could run in anywhere for safety. Grizzled old sailors were among the people, shaking their heads, as they looked from water to sky, and muttering to one another; ship-owners, excited and uneasy; children, huddling together, and peering into older faces; even stout mariners, disturbed and anxious, levelling their glasses at the sea from behind places of shelter, as if they were surveying an enemy.

The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and, at their highest, tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to the hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds flew fast and

thick ; I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.

Not finding Ham among the people whom this memorable wind—for it is still remembered down there, as the greatest ever known to blow upon that coast—had brought together, I made my way to his house. It was shut ; and as no one answered to my knocking, I went, by back ways and by-lanes, to the yard where he worked. I learned, there, that he had gone to Lowestoft, to meet some sudden exigency of ship-repairing in which his skill was required ; but that he would be back to-morrow morning, in good time.

I went back to the inn ; and when I had washed and dressed, and tried to sleep, but in vain, it was five o'clock in the afternoon. I had not sat five minutes by the coffee-room fire when the waiter, coming to stir it, as an excuse for talking, told me that two colliers had gone down, with all hands, a few miles away ; and that some other ships had been seen labouring hard in the Roads, and trying, in great distress, to keep off-shore. Mercy on them, and on all poor sailors, said he, if we had another night like the last !

I was very much depressed in spirits ; very solitary ; and felt an uneasiness in Ham's not being there, disproportionate to the occasion. I was seriously affected, without knowing how much, by late events ; and my long exposure to the fierce wind had confused me. There was that jumble in my thoughts and recollections, that I had lost the clear arrangement of time and distance. Thus, if I had gone out into the town, I should not have been surprised, I think, to encounter someone, who I knew must be then in London. So to speak, there was in

these respects a curious inattention in my mind. Yet it was busy, too, with all the remembrances the place naturally awakened ; and they were particularly distinct and vivid.

In this state, the waiter's dismal intelligence about the ships immediately connected itself, without any effort of my volition, with my uneasiness about Ham. I was persuaded that I had an apprehension of his returning from Lowestoft by sea, and being lost. This grew so strong with me, that I resolved to go back to the yard before I took my dinner, and ask the boat-builder if he thought his attempting to return by sea at all likely ? If ever he gave me the least reason to think so, I would go over to Lowestoft and prevent it by bringing him with me.

I hastily ordered my dinner, and went back to the yard. I was none too soon ; for the boat-builder, with a lantern in his hand, was locking the yard-gate. He quite laughed, when I asked him the question, and said there was no fear ; no man in his senses, or out of them, would put off in such a gale of wind, least of all Ham Peggotty, who had been born to seafaring.

So sensible of this, beforehand, that I had really felt ashamed of doing what I was nevertheless impelled to do, I went back to the inn. If such a wind could rise, I think it was rising. The howl and roar, the rattling of the doors and windows, the rumbling in the chimneys, the apparent rocking of the very house that sheltered me, and the prodigious tumult of the sea, were more fearful than in the morning. But there was now a great darkness besides ; and that invested the storm with new terrors, real and fanciful.

I could not eat, I could not sit still, I could not continue steadfast to anything. Something within

me, faintly answering to the storm without, tossed up the depths of my memory, and made a tumult in them. Yet, in all the hurry of my thoughts, wild running with the thundering sea—the storm, and my uneasiness regarding Ham, were always in the foreground.

My dinner went away almost untasted, and I tried to refresh myself with a glass or two of wine. In vain. I fell into a dull slumber before the fire, without losing my consciousness, either of the uproar out of doors, or of the place in which I was. Both became overshadowed by a new and indefinable horror: and when I awoke—or rather when I shook off the lethargy that bound me in my chair—my whole frame thrilled with objectless and unintelligible fear.

I walked to and fro, tried to read an old gazetteer, listened to the awful noises: looked at faces, scenes, and figures in the fire. At length, the steady ticking of the undisturbed clock on the wall, tormented me to that degree that I resolved to go to bed.

It was reassuring, on such a night, to be told that some of the inn-servants had agreed together to sit up until morning. I went to bed, exceedingly weary and heavy; but, on my lying down, all such sensations vanished, as if by magic, and I was broad awake, with every sense refined.

For hours I lay there, listening to the wind and water; imagining, now, that I heard shrieks out at sea; now, that I distinctly heard the firing of signal guns; and now, the fall of houses in the town. I got up, several times, and looked out; but could see nothing, except the reflection in the window-panes of the faint candle I had left burning, and of my own haggard face looking in at me from the black void.

At length, my restlessness attained to such a pitch, that I hurried on my clothes, and went downstairs. In the large kitchen, where I dimly saw bacon and ropes of onions hanging from the beams, the watchers were clustered together, in various attitudes, about a table, purposely moved away from the great chimney, and brought near the door. A pretty girl, who had her ears stopped with her apron, and her eyes upon the door, screamed when I appeared, supposing me to be a spirit; but the others had more presence of mind, and were glad of an addition to their company. One man, referring to the topic they had been discussing, asked me whether I thought the souls of the collier-crews who had gone down, were out in the storm?

I remained there, I daresay, two hours. Once, I opened the yard-gate, and looked into the empty street. The sand, the sea-weed, and the flakes of foam, were driving by; and I was obliged to call for assistance before I could shut the gate again, and make it fast against the wind.

There was a dark gloom in my solitary chamber, when I at length returned to it; but I was tired now, and, getting into bed again, fell—off a tower and down a precipice—into the depths of sleep. I have an impression that for a long time, though I dreamed of being elsewhere and in a variety of scenes, it was always blowing in my dream. At length, I lost that feeble hold upon reality, and was engaged with two dear friends, but who they were I don't know, at the siege of some town in a roar of cannonading.

The thunder of the cannon was so loud and incessant, that I could not hear something I much desired to hear, until I made a great exertion

and awoke. It was broad day—eight or nine o'clock ; the storm raging, in lieu of the batteries ; and some one knocking and calling at my door.

"What is the matter ?" I cried.

"A wreck ! Close by !"

I sprung out of bed, and asked what wreck ?

"A schooner, from Spain or Portugal, laden with fruit and wine. Make haste, sir, if you want to see her ! It's thought, down on the beach, she'll go to pieces every moment."

The excited voice went clamouring along the staircase ; and I wrapped myself in my clothes as quickly as I could, and ran into the street.

Numbers of people were there before me, all running in one direction, to the beach. I ran the same way, outstripping a good many, and soon came facing the wild sea.

The wind might by this time have lulled a little, though not more sensibly than if the cannonading I had dreamed of, had been diminished by the silencing of half a dozen guns out of hundreds. But, the sea, having upon it the additional agitation of the whole night, was infinitely more terrific than when I had seen it last. Every appearance it had then presented, bore the expression of being *swelled* ; and the height to which the breakers rose, and, looking over one another, bore one another down, and rolled in, in interminable hosts, was most appalling.

In the difficulty of hearing anything but wind and waves, and in the crowd, and the unspeakable confusion, and my first breathless efforts to stand against the weather, I was so confused that I looked out to sea for the wreck, and saw nothing but the foaming heads of the great waves. A half-dressed boatman, standing next me, pointed with his bare

arm (a tattooed arrow on it, pointing in the same direction) to the left. Then, O great Heaven, I saw it, close in upon us !

One-mast was broken short off, six or eight feet from the deck, and lay over the side, entangled in a maze of sail and rigging ; and all that ruin, as the ship rolled and beat—which she did without a moment's pause, and with a violence quite inconceivable—beat the side as if it would stave it in. Some efforts were even then being made, to cut this portion of the wreck away ; for, as the ship, which was broadside on, turned towards us in her rolling, I plainly descried her people at work with axes, especially one active figure with long curling hair, conspicuous among the rest. But, a great cry, which was audible even above the wind and water, rose from the shore at this moment ; the sea, sweeping over the rolling wreck, made a clean breach, and carried men, spars, casks, planks, bulwarks, heaps of such toys, into the boiling surge.

The second mast was yet standing, with the rags of a rent sail, and a wild confusion of broken cordage flapping to and fro. The ship had struck once, the same boatman hoarsely said in my ear, and then lifted in and struck again. I understood him to add that she was parting amidships, and I could readily suppose so, for the rolling and beating were too tremendous for any human work to suffer long. As he spoke, there was another great cry of pity from the beach ; four men arose with the wreck out of the deep, clinging to the rigging of the remaining mast ; uppermost, the active figure with the curling hair.

There was a bell on board ; and as the ship rolled and dashed, like a desperate creature driven mad,

now showing us the whole sweep of her deck, as she turned on her beam-ends towards the shore, now nothing but her keel, as she sprung wildly over and turned towards the sea, the bell rang; and its sound, the knell of those unhappy men, was borne towards us on the wind. Again we lost her, and again she rose. Two men were gone. The agony on shore increased. Men groaned, and clasped their hands; women shrieked, and turned away their faces. Some ran wildly up and down along the beach, crying for help where no help could be. I found myself one of these, frantically imploring a knot of sailors whom I knew, not to let those two lost creatures perish before our eyes.

They were making out to me, in an agitated way—I don't know how, for the little I could hear I was scarcely composed enough to understand—that the lifeboat had been bravely manned an hour ago, and could do nothing; and that as no man would be so desperate as to attempt to wade off with a rope, and establish a communication with the shore, there was nothing left to try; when I noticed that some new sensation moved the people on the beach, and saw them part, and Ham come breaking through them to the front.

I ran to him—as well as I know, to repeat my appeal for help. But, distracted though I was, by a sight so new to me and terrible, the determination in his face, and his look, out to sea—exactly the same look as I remembered in connection with the morning after Emily's flight—awoke me to a knowledge of his danger. I held him back with both arms; and implored the men with whom I had been speaking, not to listen to him, not to do murder, not to let him stir from off that sand!

Another cry arose on shore ; and looking to the wreck, we saw the cruel sail, with blow on blow, beat off the lower of the two men, and fly up in triumph round the active figure left alone upon the mast.

Against such a sight, and against such determination as that of the calmly desperate man who was already accustomed to lead half the people present, I might as hopefully have entreated the wind. "Mas'r Davy," he said, cheerily grasping me by both hands, "if my time is come, 'tis come. If 'tan't, I'll bide it. Lord above bless you, and bless all ! Mates, make me ready ! I'm a going off !"

I was swept away, but not unkindly, to some distance, where the people around me made me stay ; urging, as I confusedly perceived, that he was bent on going, with help or without, and that I should endanger the precautions for his safety by troubling those with whom they rested. I don't know what I answered, or what they rejoined ; but, I saw hurry on the beach, and men running with ropes from a capstan that was there, and penetrating into a circle of figures that hid him from me. Then, I saw him standing alone, in a seaman's frock and trousers : a rope in his hand, or slung to his wrist : another round his body : and several of the best men holding, at a little distance, to the latter, which he laid out himself, slack upon the shore, at his feet.

The wreck, even to my unpractised eye, was breaking up. I saw that she was parting in the middle, and that the life of the solitary man upon the mast hung by a thread. Still, he clung to it. He had a singular red cap on—not like a sailor's cap, but of a finer colour ; and as the few yielding planks between him, and destruction rolled and bulged, and his anticipative, death-knell rung, he was seen by all

of us to wave it. I saw him do-aten to death by the I was going distracted, when his act-stilled for ever. old remembrance to my mind of a once dear andoned

Ham watched the sea, standing alone, with the silence of suspended breath behind him, and the storm before, until there was a great retiring wave, when, with a backward glance at those who held the rope which was made fast round his body, he dashed in after it, and in a moment was buffeting with the water; rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the foam; then drawn again to land. They hauled in hastily.

He was hurt. I saw blood on his face, from where I stood; but he took no thought of that. He seemed hurriedly to give them some directions for leaving him more free—or so I judged from the motion of his arm—and was gone as before.

And now he made for the wreck, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the rugged foam, borne in towards the shore, borne on towards the ship, striving hard and valiantly. The distance was nothing, but the power of the sea and wind made the strife deadly. At length he neared the wreck. He was so near, that with one more of his vigorous strokes he would be clinging to it—when, a high, green, vast hill-side of water moving on shoreward, from beyond the ship, he seemed to leap up into it with a mighty bound, and the ship was gone!

Some eddying fragments I saw in the sea, as if a mere cask had been broken, in running to the spot where they were hauling in. Consternation was in every face. They drew him to my very feet—insensible—dead. He was carried to the nearest house; and, no one preventing me now, I remained near him, busy, while every means of restoration

Another cry arose
wreck, we saw the
off the low
round



THE SHIPWRECK ON YARMOUTH BEACH.

were tried ; but he had been beaten to death by the great wave, and his generous heart was stilled for ever.

As I sat beside the bed, when hope was abandoned and all was done, a fisherman, who had known me when Emily and I were children, and ever since, whispered my name at the door.

"Sir," said he, with tears starting to his weather-beaten face, which, with his trembling lips, was ashy pale, "will you come over yonder?"

The old remembrance that had been recalled to me, was in his look. I asked him, terror-stricken, leaning on the arm he held out to support me—

"Has a body come ashore?"

He said, "Yes."

"Do I know it?" I asked then.

He answered nothing.

But he led me to the shore. And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children—on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind—among the ruins of the home he had wronged—I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

SCENES FROM "PICKWICK."

MR. PICKWICK ON THE ICE.

"Now," said Wardle, after a substantial lunch, with the agreeable items of strong beer and cherry-brandy, had been done ample justice to, "what say you to an hour on the ice? We shall have plenty of time."

"Capital!" said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"Prime!" ejaculated Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"You skate, of course, Winkle?" said Wardle.

"Ye—yes; oh, yes," replied Mr. Winkle. "I—I—am *rather* out of practice."

"Oh, *do* skate, Mr. Winkle," said Arabella. "I like to see it so much."

"Oh, it is *so* graceful," said another young lady.

A third young lady said it was elegant, and a fourth expressed her opinion that it was "swan-like."

"I should be very happy, I'm sure," said Mr. Winkle, reddening; "but I have no skates."

This objection was at once overruled. Trundle had a couple of pair, and the fat boy announced that there were half a dozen more downstairs; whereat Mr. Winkle expressed exquisite delight, and looked exquisitely uncomfortable.

Old Wardle led the way to a pretty large sheet of ice; and the fat boy and Mr. Weller, having shovelled and swept away the snow which had fallen on it during the night, Mr. Bob Sawyer adjusted his skates with a dexterity which to Mr. Winkle was perfectly marvellous, and described circles with his left leg, and cut figures of eight, and inscribed upon the ice, without once stopping for breath, a great many other pleasant and astonishing devices, to the excessive satisfaction of Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, and the ladies; which reached a pitch of positive enthusiasm, when old Wardle and Benjamin Allen, assisted by the aforesaid Bob Sawyer, performed some mystic evolutions, which they called a reel.

All this time, Mr. Winkle, with his face and hands blue with the cold, had been forcing a gimlet into the soles of his feet, and putting his skates on, with the points behind, and getting the straps into a very

complicated and entangled state, with the assistance of Mr. Snodgrass, who knew rather less about skates than a Hindoo. At length, however, with the assistance of Mr. Weller, the unfortunate skates were firmly screwed and buckled on, and Mr. Winkle was raised to his feet.

"Now, then, sir," said Sam, in an encouraging tone; "off with you, and show 'em how to do it."

"Stop, Sam, stop!" said Mr. Winkle, trembling violently, and clutching hold of Sam's arms with the grasp of a drowning man. "How slippery it is, Sam!"

"Not an uncommon thing upon ice, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "Hold up, sir!"

This last observation of Mr. Weller's bore reference to a demonstration Mr. Winkle made at the instant, of a frantic desire to throw his feet in the air, and dash the back of his head on the ice.

"These—these—are very awkward skates; ain't they, Sam?" inquired Mr. Winkle, staggering.

"I'm afeerd there's a orkard gen'l'm'n in 'em, sir," replied Sam.

"Now, Winkle," cried Mr. Pickwick, quite unconscious that there was anything the matter. "Come; the ladies are all anxiety."

"Yes, yes," replied Mr. Winkle, with a ghastly smile. "I'm coming."

"Just a-goin' to begin," said Sam, endeavouring to disengage himself. "Now, sir, start off!"

"Stop an instant, Sam," gasped Mr. Winkle, clinging most affectionately to Mr. Weller. "I find I've got a couple of coats at home that I don't want, Sam. You may have them, Sam."

"Thank'ee, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Never mind touching your hat, Sam," said

Mr. Winkle hastily. "You needn't take your hand away to do that. I meant to have given you five shillings this morning for a Christmas box, Sam. I'll give it you this afternoon, Sam."

"You're very good, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Just hold me at first, Sam; will you?" said Mr. Winkle. "There—that's right. I shall soon get in the way of it, Sam. Not too fast, Sam; not too fast."

Mr. Winkle, stooping forward, with his body half doubled up, was being assisted over the ice by Mr. Weller, in a very singular and un-swan-like manner, when Mr. Pickwick most innocently shouted from the opposite bank—

"Sam!"

"Sir?"

"Here. I want you."

"Let go, sir," said Sam. "Don't you hear the governor a-callin' ? Let go, sir."

With a violent effort, Mr. Weller disengaged himself from the grasp of the agonised Pickwickian, and, in so doing, administered a considerable impetus to the unhappy Mr. Winkle. With an accuracy which no degree of dexterity or practice could have insured, that unfortunate gentleman bore swiftly down into the centre of the reel, at the very moment when Mr. Bob Sawyer was performing a flourish of unparalleled beauty. Mr. Winkle struck wildly against him, and with a loud crash they both fell heavily down. Mr. Pickwick ran to the spot. Bob Sawyer had risen to his feet, but Mr. Winkle was far too wise to do anything of the kind in skates. He was seated on the ice, making spasmodic efforts to smile; but anguish was depicted on every lineament of his countenance.

"Are you hurt?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, with great anxiety.

"Not much," said Mr. Winkle, rubbing his back very hard.

"I wish you'd let me bleed you," said Mr. Benjamin, with great eagerness.

"No thank you," replied Mr. Winkle hurriedly.

"I really think you had better," said Allen.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Winkle; "I'd rather not."

"What do *you* think, Mr. Pickwick?" inquired Bob Sawyer.

Mr. Pickwick was excited and indignant. He beckoned to Mr. Weller, and said in a stern voice, "Take his skates off."

"No; but really I had scarcely begun," remonstrated Mr. Winkle.

"Take his skates off," repeated Mr. Pickwick firmly.

The command was not to be resisted. Mr. Winkle allowed Sam to obey it, in silence.

"Lift him up," said Mr. Pickwick. Sam assisted him to rise.

Mr. Pickwick retired a few paces apart from the bystanders; and, beckoning his friend to approach, fixed a searching look upon him, and uttered in a low but distinct and emphatic tone, these remarkable words—

"You're a humbug, sir."

"A what?" said Mr. Winkle, starting.

"A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it. An impostor, sir."

With these words, Mr. Pickwick turned slowly on his heel, and rejoined his friends.

While Mr. Pickwick was delivering himself of the

sentiment just recorded, Mr. Weller and the fat boy, having by their joint endeavours cut out a slide, were exercising themselves thereupon, in a very masterly and brilliant manner. Sam Weller, in particular, was displaying that beautiful feat of fancy-sliding which is currently denominated "knocking at the cobbler's door," and which is achieved by skimming over the ice on one foot, and occasionally giving a postman's knock upon it with the other. It was a good long slide, and there was something in the motion which Mr. Pickwick, who was very cold with standing still, could not help envying.

"It looks a nice warm exercise that, doesn't it?" he inquired of Wardle, when that gentleman was thoroughly out of breath, by reason of the indefatigable manner in which he had converted his legs into a pair of compasses, and drawn complicated problems on the ice.

"Ah, it does, indeed," replied Wardle. "Do you slide?"

"I used to do so, on the gutters, when I was a boy," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Try it now," said Wardle.

"Oh, do, please, Mr. Pickwick!" cried all the ladies.

"I should be very happy to afford you any amusement," replied Mr. Pickwick, "but I haven't done such a thing these thirty years."

"Pooh! pooh! Nonsense!" said Wardle, dragging off his skates with the impetuosity which characterised all his proceedings. "Here; I'll keep you company; come along!" And away went the good-tempered old fellow down the slide, with a rapidity which came very close upon Mr. Weller, and beat the fat boy all to nothing.

Mr. Pickwick paused, considered, pulled off his gloves and put them in his hat; took two or three short runs, balked himself as often, and at last took another run, and went slowly and gravely down the slide, with his feet about a yard and a quarter apart, amidst the gratified shouts of all the spectators.

"Keep the pot a-bilin', sir!" said Sam; and down went Wardle again, and then Mr. Pickwick, and then Sam, and then Mr. Winkle, and then Mr. Bob Sawyer, and then the fat boy, and then Mr. Snodgrass, following closely upon each other's heels, and running after each other with as much eagerness as if their future prospects in life depended on their expedition.

It was the most intensely interesting thing, to observe the manner in which Mr. Pickwick performed his share in the ceremony; to watch the torture of anxiety with which he viewed the person behind, gaining upon him at the imminent hazard of tripping him up; to see him gradually expend the painful force he had put on at first, and turn slowly round on the slide, with his face towards the point from which he had started; to contemplate the playful smile which mantled on his face when he had accomplished the distance, and the eagerness with which he turned round when he had done so, and ran after his predecessor, his black gaiters tripping pleasantly through the snow, and his eyes beaming cheerfulness and gladness through his spectacles. And when he was knocked down (which happened upon the average every third round), it was the most invigorating sight that can possibly be imagined, to behold him gather up his hat, gloves, and handkerchief, with a glowing countenance, and resume his station in the rank, with an ardour and enthusiasm that nothing could abate.

The sport was at its height, the sliding was at the quickest, the laughter was at the loudest, when a sharp crack was heard. There was a quick rush towards the bank, a wild scream from the ladies, and a shout from Mr. Tupman. A large mass of ice disappeared; the water bubbled up over it; Mr. Pickwick's hat, gloves, and handkerchief were floating on the surface; and this was all of Mr. Pickwick that anybody could see.

Dismay and anguish were depicted on every countenance; the males turned pale, and the females fainted; Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle grasped each other by the hand, and gazed at the spot where their leader had gone down, with frenzied eagerness; while Mr. Tupman, by way of rendering the promptest assistance, and at the same time conveying to any persons who might be within hearing, the clearest possible notion of the catastrophe, ran off across the country at his utmost speed, screaming "Fire!" with all his might.

It was at this moment, when old Wardle and Sam Weller were approaching the hole with cautious steps, and Mr. Benjamin Allen was holding a hurried consultation with Mr. Bob Sawyer on the advisability of bleeding the company generally, as an improving little bit of professional practice—it was at this very moment, that a face, head, and shoulders, emerged from beneath the water, and disclosed the features and spectacles of Mr. Pickwick.

"Keep yourself up for an instant—for only one instant!" bawled Mr. Snodgrass.

"Yes, do; let me implore you—for my sake!" roared Mr. Winkle, deeply affected. The adjuration was rather unnecessary; the probability being, that if Mr. Pickwick had declined to keep himself up for

anybody else's sake, it would have occurred to him that he might as well do so, for his own.

"Do you feel the bottom there, old fellow?" said Wardle.

"Yes, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick, wringing the water from his head and face, and gasping for breath. "I fell upon my back. I couldn't get on my feet at first."

The clay upon so much of Mr. Pickwick's coat as was yet visible, bore testimony to the accuracy of this statement; and as the fears of the spectators were still further relieved by the fat boy's suddenly recollecting that the water was nowhere more than five feet deep, prodigies of valour were performed to get him out. After a vast quantity of splashing, and cracking, and struggling, Mr. Pickwick was at length fairly extricated from his unpleasant position, and once more stood on dry land.

"Oh, he'll catch his death of cold," said Emily.

"Dear old thing!" said Arabella. "Let me wrap this shawl round you, Mr. Pickwick."

"Ah, that's the best thing you can do," said Wardle; "and when you've got it on, run home as fast as your legs can carry you, and jump into bed directly."

A dozen shawls were offered on the instant. Three or four of the thickest having been selected, Mr. Pickwick was wrapped up, and started off, under the guidance of Mr. Weller; presenting the singular phenomenon of an elderly gentleman, dripping wet, and without a hat, with his arms bound down to his sides, skimming over the ground, without any clearly-defined purpose, at the rate of six good English miles an hour.

But Mr. Pickwick cared not for appearances in

such an extreme case, and urged on by Sam Weller, he kept at the very top of his speed until he reached the door of Manor Farm, where Mr. Tupman had arrived some five minutes before, and had frightened the old lady into palpitations of the heart by impressing her with the unalterable conviction that the kitchen chimney was on fire—a calamity which always presented itself in glowing colours to the old lady's mind, when anybody about her evinced the smallest agitation.

Mr. Pickwick paused not an instant until he was snug in bed. Sam Weller lighted a blazing fire in the room, and took up his dinner; a bowl of punch was carried up afterwards, and a grand carouse held in honour of his safety. Old Wardle would not hear of his rising, so they made the bed the chair, and Mr. Pickwick presided. A second and a third bowl were ordered in; and when Mr. Pickwick awoke next morning, there was not a symptom of rheumatism about him; which proves, as Mr. Bob Sawyer very justly observed, that there is nothing like hot punch in such cases; and that if ever hot punch did fail to act as a preventive, it was merely because the patient fell into the vulgar error of not taking enough of it.

THE RIDE THAT FAILED.

Mr. Pickwick found that his three companions had risen, and were waiting his arrival to commence breakfast, which was ready laid in tempting display. They sat down at the meal; and broiled ham, eggs, tea, coffee and sundries, began to disappear with a rapidity which at once bore testimony to the excellence of the fare, and the appetites of its consumers.

"Now, about Manor Farm," said Mr. Pickwick. "How shall we go?"

"We had better consult the waiter, perhaps," said Mr. Tupman; and the waiter was summoned accordingly.

"Dingley Dell, gentlemen—fifteen miles, gentlemen—cross road—post-chaise, sir?"

"Post-chaise won't hold more than two," said Mr. Pickwick.

"True, sir—beg your pardon, sir.—Very nice four-wheel chaise, sir—seat for two behind—one in front for the gentleman that drives—oh! beg your pardon, sir—that'll only hold three."

"What's to be done?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Perhaps one of the gentlemen would like to ride, sir?" suggested the waiter, looking towards Mr. Winkle; "very good saddle-horses, sir—any of Mr. Wardle's men coming to Rochester, bring 'em back, sir."

"The very thing," said Mr. Pickwick. "Winkle, will you go on horseback?"

Now Mr. Winkle did entertain considerable misgivings in the very lowest recesses of his own heart, relative to his equestrian skill; but, as he would not have them even suspected, on any account, he at once replied with great hardihood, "Certainly. I should enjoy it of all things."

Mr. Winkle had rushed upon his fate; there was no resource. "Let them be at the door by eleven," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very well, sir," replied the waiter.

The waiter retired; the breakfast concluded; and the travellers ascended to their respective bedrooms, to prepare a change of clothing, to take with them on their approaching expedition.

Mr. Pickwick had made his preliminary arrangements, and was looking over the coffee-room blinds at the passengers in the street, when the waiter entered, and announced that the chaise was ready—an announcement which the vehicle itself confirmed, by forthwith appearing before the coffee-room blinds aforesaid.

It was a curious little green box on four wheels, with a low place like a wine-bin for two behind, and an elevated perch for one in front, drawn by an immense brown horse, displaying great symmetry of bone. An hostler stood near, holding by the bridle another immense horse—apparently a near relative of the animal in the chaise—ready saddled for Mr. Winkle.

“Bless my soul!” said Mr. Pickwick, as they stood upon the pavement while the coats were being put in. “Bless my soul! who’s to drive? I never thought of that.”

“Oh! you, of course,” said Mr. Tupman.

“Of course,” said Mr. Snodgrass.

“I!” exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

“Not the slightest fear, sir,” interposed the hostler. “Warrant him quiet, sir; a hinfant in arms might drive him.”

“He don’t shy, does he?” inquired Mr. Pickwick.

“Shy, sir?—he wouldn’t shy if he was to meet a vagin-load of monkeys with their tails burned off.”

The last recommendation was indisputable. Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass got into the bin; Mr. Pickwick ascended to his perch, and deposited his feet on a floor-clothed shelf, erected beneath it for that purpose.

“Now, shiny Villiam,” said the hostler to the deputy hostler, “give the gent’lm’n the ribbons.”

“Shiny Villiam”—so-called, probably, from his

sleek hair and oily countenance—placed the reins in Mr. Pickwick's left hand; and the upper hostler thrust a whip into his right.

"Wo—o!" cried Mr. Pickwick, as the tall quadruped evinced a decided inclination to back into the coffee-room window.

"Wo—o!" echoed Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass, from the bin.

"Only his playfulness, gen'lm'n," said the head hostler encouragingly; "jist kitch hold on him, Villiam." The deputy restrained the animal's impetuosity, and the principal ran to assist Mr. Winkle in mounting.

"T'other side, sir, if you please."

"Blowed if the gen'lm'n worn't a-gettin' up on the wrong side," whispered a grinning post-boy to the inexpressibly gratified waiter.

Mr. Winkle, thus instructed, climbed into his saddle, with about as much difficulty as he would have experienced in getting up the side of a first-rate man-of-war.

"All right?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, with an inward presentiment that it was all wrong.

"All right," replied Mr. Winkle faintly.

"Let 'em go," cried the hostler.—"Hold him in, sir;" and away went the chaise, and the saddle-horse, with Mr. Pickwick on the box of the one, and Mr. Winkle on the back of the other, to the delight and gratification of the whole inn-yard.

"What makes him go sideways?" said Mr. Snodgrass in the bin, to Mr. Wink' in the saddle.

"I can't imagine," replied Mr. Winkle. His horse was drifting up the street in the most mysterious manner—side first, with his head towards one side of the way, and his tail towards the other.

Mr. Pickwick had no leisure to observe either this or any other particular, the whole of his faculties being concentrated in the management of the animal attached to the chaise, who displayed various peculiarities, highly interesting to a bystander, but by no means equally amusing to any one seated behind him. Besides constantly jerking his head up, in a very unpleasant and uncomfortable manner, and tugging at the reins to an extent which rendered it a matter of great difficulty for Mr. Pickwick to hold them, he had a singular propensity for darting suddenly every now and then to the side of the road, then stopping short and then rushing forward for some minutes, at a speed which it was wholly impossible to control.

"What *can* he mean by this?" said Mr. Snodgrass, when the horse had executed this manœuvre for the twentieth time.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Tupman; "it *looks* very like shying, don't it?" Mr. Snodgrass was about to reply, when he was interrupted by a shout from Mr. Pickwick.

"Woo!" said that gentleman; "I have dropped my whip."

"Winkle," said Mr. Snodgrass, as the equestrian came trotting up on the tall horse, with his hat over his ears, and shaking all over, as if he would shake to pieces, with the violence of the exercise, "pick up the whip, there's a good fellow." Mr. Winkle pulled at the bridle of the tall horse till he was black in the face; and having at length succeeded in stopping him, dismounted, handed the whip to Mr. Pickwick, and grasping the reins, prepared to remount.

Now whether the tall horse, in the natural playfulness of his disposition, was desirous of having a little innocent recreation with Mr. Winkle, or whether

it occurred to him that he could perform the journey as much to his own satisfaction without a rider as with one, are points upon which, of course, we can arrive at no definite and distinct conclusion. By whatever motives the animal was actuated, certain it is that Mr. Winkle had no sooner touched the reins, than he slipped them over his head, and darted backwards to their full length.

"Poor fellow," said Mr. Winkle soothingly—"poor fellow—good old horse." The "poor fellow" was proof against flattery; the more Mr. Winkle tried to get nearer him, the more he sidled away; and, notwithstanding all kinds of coaxing and wheedling, there were Mr. Winkle and the horse going round and round each other for ten minutes, at the end of which time each was at precisely the same distance from the other as when they first commenced—an unsatisfactory sort of thing under any circumstances, but particularly so in a lonely road, where no assistance can be procured.

"What am I to do?" shouted Mr. Winkle, after the dodging had been prolonged for a considerable time. "What am I to do? I can't get on him."

"You had better lead him till we come to a turn-pike," replied Mr. Pickwick from the chaise.

"But he won't come!" roared Mr. Winkle. "Do come and hold him."

Mr. Pickwick was the very personation of kindness and humanity; he threw the reins on the horses back, and having descended from his seat, carefully drew the chaise into the hedge, lest anything should come along the road, and stepped back to the assistance of his distressed companion, leaving Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the vehicle.

The horse no sooner beheld Mr. Pickwick advancing

towards him with the chaise whip in his hand, than he exchanged the rotary motion in which he had previously indulged, for a retrograde movement of so very determined a character, that it at once drew Mr. Winkle, who was still at the end of the bridle, at a rather quicker rate than fast walking, in the direction from which they had just come. Mr. Pickwick ran to his assistance, but the faster Mr. Pickwick ran forward, the faster the horse ran backward. There was a great scraping of feet, and kicking up of the dust; and at last Mr. Winkle, his arms being nearly pulled out of their sockets, fairly let go his hold. The horse paused, stared, shook his head, turned round, and quietly trotted home to Rochester, leaving Mr. Winkle and Mr. Pickwick gazing on each other with countenances of blank dismay. A rattling noise at a little distance attracted their attention. They looked up.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the agonised Mr. Pickwick; "there's the other horse running away!"

It was but too true. The animal was startled by the noise, and the reins were on his back. The result may be guessed. He tore off with the four-wheeled chaise behind him, and Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the four-wheeled chaise. The heat was a short one. Mr. Tupman threw himself into the hedge, Mr. Snodgrass followed his example, the horse dashed the four-wheeled chaise against a wooden bridge, separated the wheels from the body, and the bin from the perch; and finally stood stock still to gaze upon the ruin he had made.

The first care of the two unspilt friends was to extricate their unfortunate companions from their bed of quickset—a process which gave them the unspeakable satisfaction of discovering that they had

sustained no injury, beyond sundry rents in their garments, and various lacerations from the brambles. The next thing to be done was to unharness the horse. This complicated process having been effected, the party walked slowly forward, leading the horse among them, and abandoning the chaise to its fate.

An hour's walk brought the travellers to a little roadside public-house, with two elm-trees, a horse trough, and a sign-post, in front; one or two deformed hay-ricks behind, a kitchen garden at the side, and rotten sheds and mouldering outhouses jumbled in strange confusion all about it. A red-headed man was working in the garden; and to him Mr. Pickwick called lustily, "Hollo there!"

The red-headed man raised his body, shaded his eyes with his hand, and stared, long and coolly, at Mr. Pickwick and his companions.

"Hollo there!" repeated Mr. Pickwick.

"Hollo!" was the red-headed man's reply.

"How far is it to Dingley Dell?"

"Better er seven mile."

"Is it a good road?"

"No, 'tain't." Having uttered this brief reply, and apparently satisfied himself with another scrutiny, the red-headed man resumed his work.

"We want to put this horse up here," said Mr. Pickwick; "I suppose we can, can't we?"

"Want to put that ere horse up, do ee?" repeated the red-headed man, leaning on his spade.

"Of course," replied Mr. Pickwick, who had by this time advanced, horse in hand, to the garden rails.

"Missus"—roared the man with the red head, emerging from the garden, and looking very hard at the horse—"missus!"

A tall, bony woman—straight all the way down—

in a coarse, blue pelisse, with the waist an inch or two below her arm-pits, responded to the call.

"Can we put this horse up here, my good woman?" said Mr. Tupman, advancing, and speaking in his most seductive tones. The woman looked very hard at the whole party; and the red-headed man whispered something in her ear.

"No," replied the woman, after a little consideration. "I'm afeerd on it."

"Afraid!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, "what's the woman afraid of?"

"It got us in trouble last time," said the woman, turning into the house; "I woan't have nothin' to say to 'un."

"Most extraordinary thing I have ever met with in my life," said the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

"I—I—really believe," whispered Mr. Winkle, as his friends gathered round him, "that they think we have come by this horse in some dishonest manner."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, in a storm of indignation. Mr. Winkle modestly repeated his suggestion.

"Hullo, you fellow," said the angry Mr. Pickwick, "do you think we stole the horse?"

"I'm sure ye did," replied the red-headed man, with a grin which agitated his countenance from one auricular organ to the other. Saying which he turned into the house and banged the door after him.

"It's like a dream," ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, "a hideous dream. The idea of a man's walking about all day with a dreadful horse that he can't get rid of!" The depressed Pickwickians turned moodily away, with the tall quadruped, for which they all felt the most unmitigated disgust, following slowly at their heels.

It was late in the afternoon when the four friends and their four-footed companion turned into the lane leading to Manor Farm; and even when they were so near their place of destination, the pleasure they would otherwise have experienced was materially damped as they reflected on the singularity of their appearance, and the absurdity of their situation. Torn clothes, lacerated faces, dusty shoes, exhausted looks, and, above all, the horse. Oh, how Mr. Pickwick cursed that horse: he had eyed the noble animal from time to time with looks expressive of hatred and revenge; more than once he had calculated the probable amount of the expense he would incur by cutting his throat; and now the temptation to destroy him, or to cast him loose upon the world, rushed upon his mind with tenfold force. He was roused from a meditation on these dire imaginings by the sudden appearance of two figures at a turn of the lane. It was Mr. Wardle, and his faithful attendant, the fat boy.

"Why, where *have* you been?" said the hospitable old gentleman; "I've been waiting for you all day. Well, you *do* look tired. What! Scratches! Not hurt, I hope—eh? Well, I *am* glad to hear that—very. So you've been spilt, eh? Never mind. Common accident in these parts. Joe—he's asleep again!—Joe, take that horse from the gentleman, and lead it into the stable."

The fat boy sauntered heavily behind them with the animal; and the old gentleman, condoling with his guests in homely phrase on so much of the day's adventures as they thought proper to communicate, led the way to the kitchen.

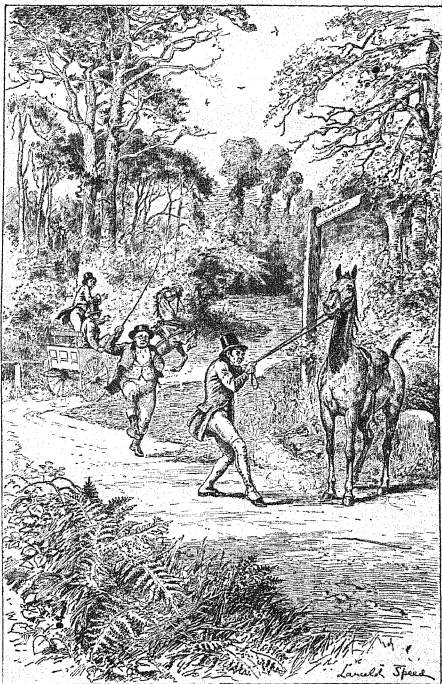
"We'll have you put to rights here," said the old gentleman, "and then I'll introduce you to the people

in the parlour. Emma, bring out the cherry brandy ; now, Jane, a needle and thread here ; towels and water, Mary. Come, girls, bustle about."

Three or four buxom girls speedily dispersed in search of the different articles in requisition, while a couple of large-headed, circular-visaged males rose from their seats in the chimney-corner (for although it was a May evening their attachment to the wood fire appeared as cordial as if it were Christmas), and dived into some obscure recesses, from which they speedily produced a bottle of blacking, and some half-dozen brushes.

"Bustle!" said the old gentleman again, but the admonition was quite unnecessary, for one of the girls poured out the cherry brandy, and another brought in the towels, and one of the men suddenly seizing Mr. Pickwick by the leg, at imminent hazard of throwing him off his balance, brushed away at his boot till his corns were red-hot ; while the other shampooed Mr. Winkle with a heavy clothes-brush, indulging, during the operation, in that hissing sound which hostlers are wont to produce when engaged in rubbing down a horse.

Mr. Snodgrass, having concluded his ablutions, took a survey of the room, while standing with his back to the fire, sipping his cherry brandy with heartfelt satisfaction. He describes it as a large apartment, with a red brick floor and a capacious chimney ; the ceiling garnished with hams, sides of bacon, and ropes of onions. The walls were decorated with several hunting-whips, two or three bridles, a saddle, and an old rusty blunderbuss, with an inscription below it, intimating that it was "Loaded" —as it had been, on the same authority, for half a century at least. An old eight-day clock, of solemn



THE "POOR FELLOW" WAS PROOF AGAINST FLATTERY.

and sedate demeanour, ticked gravely in one corner ; and a silver watch, of equal antiquity, dangled from one of the many hooks which ornamented the dresser.

"Ready?" said the old gentleman inquiringly, when his guests had been washed, mended, brushed, and brandied.

"Quite," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Come along, then;" and the party having traversed several dark passages, and being joined by Mr. Tupman, who had lingered behind to snatch a kiss from Emma, for which he had been duly rewarded with sundry pushings and scratchings, arrived at the parlour door.

"Welcome," said their hospitable host, throwing it open and stepping forward to announce them, "welcome, gentlemen, to Manor Farm."

SCENES FROM "MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT"

TOM PINCH LEAVES FOR LONDON AND SETS UP HOUSE-KEEPING WITH RUTH, HIS SISTER.

WHEN the coach came round at last, with "London" blazoned in letters of gold upon the boot, it gave Tom such a turn, that he was half disposed to run away. But he didn't do it; for he took his seat upon the box instead, and looking down upon the four grays, felt as if he were another gray himself, or, at all events, a part of the turn-out; and was quite confused by the novelty and splendour of his situation.

And really it might have confused a less modest man than Tom to find himself sitting next that

coachman; for of all the swells that ever flourished a whip, professionally, he might have been elected emperor. He didn't handle his gloves like another man, but put them on—even when he was standing on the pavement, quite detached from the coach—as if the four grays were, somehow or other, at the ends of the fingers. It was the same with his hat. He did things with his hat which nothing but an unlimited knowledge of horses and the wildest freedom of the road could ever have made him perfect in. Valuable little parcels were brought to him with particular instructions, and he pitched them into his hat, and stuck it on again; as if the laws of gravity did not admit of such an event as its being knocked off or blown off, and nothing like an accident could befall it. The guard, too! Seventy breezy miles a day were written in his very whiskers. His manners were a canter; his conversation a round trot. He was a fast coach upon a down-hill turnpike road; he was all pace. A waggon couldn't have moved slowly, with that guard and his key-bugle on the top of it.

These were all foreshadowings of London, Tom thought, as he sat upon the box, and looked about him. Such a coachman, and such a guard, never could have existed between Salisbury and any other place. The coach was none of your steady-going, yokel coaches, but a swaggering, rakish, dissipated London coach; up all night, and lying by all day, and leading a devil of a life. It cared no more for Salisbury than if it had been a hamlet. It rattled noisily through the best streets, defied the Cathedral, took the worst corners sharpest, went cutting in everywhere, making everything get out of its way; and spun along the open country-road, blowing a

lively defiance out of its key-bugle, as its last glad parting legacy.

It was a charming evening. Mild and bright. And even with the weight upon his mind which arose out of the immensity and uncertainty of London, Tom could not resist the captivating sense of rapid motion through the pleasant air. The four grays skimmed along, as if they liked it quite as well as Tom did; the bugle was in as high spirits as the grays; the coachman chimed in sometimes with his voice; the wheels hummed cheerfully in unison; the brass work on the harness was an orchestra of little bells; and thus as they went clinking, jingling, rattling smoothly on, the whole concern, from the buckles of the leaders' coupling-reins to the handle of the hind boot, was one great instrument of music.

Yoho, past hedges, gates, and trees; past cottages and barns, and people going home from work. Yoho, past donkey-chaises, drawn aside into the ditch, and empty carts with rampant horses, whipped up at a bound upon the little water-course, and held by struggling carters close to the five-barred gate, until the coach had passed the narrow turning in the road. Yoho, by churches dropped down by themselves in quiet nooks, with rustic burial-grounds about them, where the graves are green, and daisies sleep—for it is evening—on the bosoms of the dead. Yoho, past streams, in which the cattle cool their feet, and where the rushes grow; past paddock-fences, farms, and rick-yards; past last year's stacks, cut, slice by slice, away, and showing, in the waning light, like ruined gables, old and brown. Yoho, down the pebbly dip, and through the merry water-splash, and up at a canter to the level road again. Yoho! Yoho!

Was the box there, when they came up to the old finger-post? The box! Was Mrs. Lupin herself? Had she turned out magnificently as a hostess should, in her own chaise-cart, and was she sitting in a mahogany chair, driving her own horse Dragon (who ought to have been called Dumpling), and looking lovely? Did the stage-coach pull up beside her, shaving her very wheel, and even while the guard helped her man up with the trunk, did he send the glad echoes of his bugle careering down the chimneys of the distant Pecksniff, as if the coach expressed its exultation in the rescue of Tom Pinch?

"This is kind indeed!" said Tom, bending down to shake hands with her. "I didn't mean to give you this trouble."

"Trouble, Mr. Pinch!" cried the hostess of the Dragon.

"Well! It's a pleasure to you, I know," said Tom, squeezing her hand heartily. "Is there any news?"

The hostess shook her head,

"Say you saw me," said Tom, "and that I was very bold and cheerful, and not a bit down-hearted; and that I entreated her to be the same, for all is certain to come right at last. Good-bye!"

"You'll write when you get settled, Mr. Pinch?" said Mrs. Lupin.

"When I get settled!" cried Tom, with an involuntary opening of his eyes. "Oh, yes, I'll write when I get settled. Perhaps I had better write before, because I may find that it takes a little time to settle myself—not having too much money, and having only one friend. I shall give your love to the friend, by the way. You were always great with Mr. Westlock, you know. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" said Mrs. Lupin, hastily producing a basket with a long bottle sticking out of it. "Take this. Good-bye!"

"Do you want me to carry it to London for you?" cried Tom. She was already turning the chaise-cart round.

"No, no," said Mrs. Lupin. "It's only a little something for refreshment on the road. Sit fast, Jack. Drive on, sir. All right! Good-bye!"

She was a quarter of a mile off before Tom collected himself; and then he was waving his hand lustily; and so was she.

"And that's the last of the old finger-post," thought Tom, straining his eyes, "where I have so often stood, to see this very coach go by, and where I have parted with so many companions! I used to compare this coach to some great monster that appeared at certain times to bear my friends away into the world. And now it's bearing me away, to seek my fortune, Heaven knows where and how!"

It made Tom melancholy to picture himself walking up the lane and back to Pecksniff's as of old, and being melancholy, he looked downwards at the basket on his knee, which he had for the moment forgotten.

"She is the kindest and most considerate creature in the world," thought Tom. "Now I *know* that she particularly told that man of hers not to look at me, on purpose to prevent my throwing him a shilling! I had it ready for him all the time, and he never once looked towards me; whereas that man naturally (for I know him very well), would have done nothing but grin and stare. Upon my word, the kindness of people perfectly melts me."

Here he caught the coachman's eye. The

coachman winked. "Remarkable fine woman for her time of life," said the coachman.

"I quite agree with you," returned Tom. "So she is."

"Finer than many a young 'un, I mean to say," observed the coachman. "Eh?"

"Than many a young one," Tom assented.

"I don't care for 'em myself when they're too young," remarked the coachman.

This was a matter of taste, which Tom did not feel himself called upon to discuss.

"You'll seldom find 'em possessing correct opinions about refreshment, for instance, when they're too young, you know," said the coachman: "a woman must have arrived at maturity before her mind's equal to coming provided with a basket like that."

"Perhaps you would like to know what it contains?" said Tom, smiling.

As the coachman only laughed, and as Tom was curious himself, he unpacked it, and put the articles, one by one, upon the footboard. A cold roast fowl, a packet of ham in slices, a crusty loaf, a piece of cheese, a paper of biscuits, half a dozen apples, a knife, some butter, a screw of salt, and a bottle of old sherry. There was a letter besides, which Tom put in his pocket.

The coachman was so earnest in his approval of Mrs. Lupin's provident habits, and congratulated Tom so warmly on his good fortune, that Tom felt it necessary, for the lady's sake, to explain that the basket was a strictly Platonic basket, and had merely been presented to him in the way of friendship. When he had made the statement with perfect gravity, for he felt it incumbent on him to disabuse the mind of this lax rover of any incorrect impressions

on the subject, he signified that he would be happy to share the gifts with him, and proposed that they should attack the basket in a spirit of good fellowship at any time in the course of the night which the coachman's experience and knowledge of the road might suggest, as being best adapted to the purpose. From this time they chatted so pleasantly together, that although Tom knew infinitely more of unicorns than horses, the coachman informed his friend the guard, at the end of the next stage, "that rum as the box-seat looked, he was as good a one to go, in pint of conversation, as ever he'd wish to sit by."

Yoho, among the gathering shades ; making of no account the deep reflections of the trees, but scampering on through light and darkness, all the same, as if the light of London, fifty miles away, were quite enough to travel by, and some to spare. Yoho, beside the village-green, where cricket-players linger yet, and every little indentation made in the fresh grass by bat or wicket, ball or player's foot, sheds out its perfume on the night. Away with four fresh horses from the Bald-faced Stag, where toppers congregate about the door admiring ; and the last team, with traces hanging loose, go roaming off towards the pond, until observed and shouted after by a dozen throats, while volunteering boys pursue them. Now, with a clattering of hoofs and striking out of fiery sparks, across the old stone bridge, and down again into the shadowy road, and through the open gate, and far away, away, into the wold. Yoho !

Yoho, behind there, stop that bugle for a moment ! Come creeping over to the front, along the coach-roof guard, and make one at this basket : Not that we slacken in our pace the while, not we—we rather put the bits of blood upon their mettle, for the

greater glory of the snack! Ah. It is long since this bottle of old wine was brought into contact with the mellow breath of night, you may depend, and rare good stuff it is to wet a bugler's whistle with. Only try it. Don't be afraid of turning up your finger, Bill, another pull! Now, take your breath, and try the bugle, Bill. There's music! There's a tone! "Over the hills and far away," indeed. Yoho! The skittish mare is all alive to-night. Yoho! Yoho!

See the bright moon! High up before we know it —making the earth reflect the objects on its breast like water. Hedges, trees, low cottages, church steeples, blighted stumps and flourishing young slips, have all grown vain upon the sudden, and mean to contemplate their own fair images till morning. The poplars yonder rustle, that their quivering leaves may see themselves upon the ground. Not so the oak; trembling does not become *him*; and he watches himself in his stout old burly steadfastness, without the motion of a twig. The moss-grown gate, ill-poised upon its creaking hinges, crippled and decayed, swings to and fro before its glass, like some fantastic dowager; while our own ghostly likeness travels on, Yoho! Yoho! through ditch and brake, upon the ploughed land and the smooth, along the steep hill-side and steeper wall, as if it were a phantom-hunter.

Clouds too! And a mist upon the Hollow! Not a dull fog that hides it, but a light, airy, gauze-like mist, which in our eyes of modest admiration gives a new charm to the beauties it is spread before —as real gauze has done ere now, and would again, so please you, though we were the Pope. Yoho! Why now we travel like the Moon herself. Hiding this minute in a grove of trees; next minute in a

patch of vapour ; emerging now upon our broad clear course ; withdrawing now, but always dashing on, our journey is a counterpart of hers. Yoho ! A match against the Moon !

The beauty of the night is hardly felt, when Day comes leaping up. Yoho ! Two stages, and the country roads are almost changed to a continuous street. Yoho, past market-gardens, rows of houses, villas, crescents, terraces, and squares ; past waggons, coaches, carts ; past early workmen, late stragglers, drunken men, and sober carriers of loads ; past brick and mortar in its every shape ; and in among the rattling pavements, where a jaunty seat upon a coach is not so easy to preserve ! Yoho, down countless turnings, and through countless mazy ways, until an old inn-yard is gained, and Tom Pinch, getting down, quite stunned and giddy, is in London !

"Five minutes before the time, too !" said the driver, as he received his fee of Tom.

"Upon my word," said Tom, "I should not have minded very much if we had been five hours after it ; for at this early hour I don't know where to go, or what to do with myself."

"Don't they expect you then ?" inquired the driver.

"Who ?" said Tom.

"Why, them," returned the driver.

His mind was so clearly running on the assumption of Tom's having come to town to see an extensive circle of anxious relations and friends, that it would have been pretty hard work to undeceive him. Tom did not try. He cheerfully evaded the subject, and going into the inn, fell fast asleep before a fire in one of the public rooms opening from the yard. When he awoke, the people in the house were all

astir, so he washed and dressed himself; to his great refreshment after the journey; and, it being by



TOM PINCH STARTS FOR LONDON.

that time eight o'clock, went forth at once to see his old friend John.

* * * * *
It was not until they had walked some short

distance, and Tom found himself getting cooler and more collected, that he was quite restored to himself by an inquiry from his sister, who said in her pleasant, little voice,—

“Where are we going, Tom !”

“Dear me !” said Tom, stopping, “I don’t know.”

“Don’t you—don’t you live anywhere, dear ?” asked Tom’s sister, looking wistfully into his face.

“No,” said Tom. “Not at present. Not exactly. I only arrived this morning. We must have some lodgings.”

He didn’t tell her that he had been going to stay with his friend John, and could on no account think of billeting two inmates upon him, of whom one was a young lady ; for he knew that would make her uncomfortable, and would cause her to regard herself as being an inconvenience to him. Neither did he like to leave her anywhere while he called on John, and told him of this change in his arrangements ; for he was delicate of seeming to encroach upon the generous and hospitable nature of his friend. Therefore he said again, “We must have some lodgings, of course ;” and said it as stoutly as if he had been a perfect directory and guide-book to all the lodgings in London.

“Where shall we go and look for ’em ?” said Tom. “What do you think ?”

Tom’s sister was not much wiser on such a topic than he was. So she squeezed her little purse into his coat-pocket, and folding the little hand with which she did so on the other little hand with which she clasped his arm, said nothing.

“It ought to be a cheap neighbourhood,” said Tom, “and not too far from London. Let me see. Should you think Islington a good place ?”

"I should think it was an excellent place, Tom."

"It used to be called Merry Islington, once upon a time," said Tom. "Perhaps it's merry now; if so, it's all the better. Eh?"

"If it's not too dear," said Tom's sister.

"Of course, if it's not too dear," assented Tom. "Well, where is Islington? We can't do better than go there, I should think. Let's go."

Tom's sister would have gone anywhere with him; so they walked on, arm in arm, as comfortably as possible. Finding, presently, that Islington was not in that neighbourhood, Tom made inquiries respecting a public conveyance thither; which they soon obtained. As they rode along they were very full of conversation indeed, Tom relating what had happened to him, and Tom's sister relating what had happened to her, and both finding a great deal more to say than time to say it in; for they had only just begun to talk, in comparison with what they had to tell each other, when they reached their journey's end.

"Now," said Tom, "we must first look out for some very unpretending streets, and then look out for bills in the windows."

So they walked off again, quite as happily as if they had just stepped out of a snug little house of their own, to look for lodgings on account of somebody else. Tom's simplicity was unabated, Heaven knows; but now that he had somebody to rely upon him, he was stimulated to rely a little more upon himself, and was, in his own opinion, quite a desperate fellow.

After roaming up and down for hours, looking at some scores of lodgings, they began to find it rather fatiguing, especially as they saw none which were at all adapted to their purpose. At length, however,

in a singular little old-fashioned house, up a blind street, they discovered two small bedrooms and a triangular parlour, which promised to suit them well enough. Their desiring to take possession immediately was a suspicious circumstance, but even this was surmounted by the payment of their first week's rent, and a reference to John Westlock, Esquire, Furnival's Inn, High Holborn.

Ah ! It was a goodly sight, when this important point was settled, to behold Tom and his sister trotting round to the baker's, and the butcher's, and the grocer's with a kind of dreadful delight in the unaccustomed cares of housekeeping ; taking secret counsel together as they gave their small orders, and distracted by the least suggestion on the part of the shop-keeper ! When they got back to the triangular parlour, and Tom's sister, bustling to and fro, busy about a thousand pleasant nothings, stopped every now and then to give old Tom a kiss, or smile upon him, Tom rubbed his hands as if all Islington were his.

It was late in the afternoon now, though, and high time for Tom to keep his appointment. So, after agreeing with his sister that in consideration of not having dined, they would venture on the extravagance of chops for supper, at nine, he walked out again to narrate these marvellous occurrences to John.

* * * *

Pleasant little Ruth ! Cheerful, tidy, bustling, quiet little Ruth ! No doll's house ever yielded greater delight to its young mistress than little Ruth derived from her glorious dominion over the triangular parlour and the two small bedrooms.

To be Tom's housekeeper. What dignity : House-keeping, upon the commonest terms, associated itself

with elevated responsibilities of all sorts and kinds ; but housekeeping for Tom implied the utmost complication of grave trusts and mighty charges. Well might she take the keys out of the little chifionier which held the tea and sugar ; and out of the two little damp cupboards down by the fire-place, where the very black beetles got mouldy, and had the shine taken out of their backs by envious mildew ; and jingle them upon a ring before Tom's eyes when he came down to breakfast ! Well might she, laughing musically, put them up in that blessed little pocket of hers with a merry pride ! For it was such a grand novelty to be mistress of anything, that if she had been the most relentless and despotic of all little housekeepers, she might have pleaded just that much for her excuse, and have been honourably acquitted.

So far from being despotic, however, there was a coyness about her very way of pouring out the tea which Tom quite revelled in. And when she asked him what he would like to have for dinner, and faltered out " chops " as a reasonably good suggestion after their last night's successful supper, Tom grew quite facetious and rallied her desperately.

" I don't know, Tom," said his sister, blushing, " I am not quite confident, but I think I could make a beef-steak pudding if I tried, Tom."

" In the whole catalogue of cookery, there is nothing I should like so much as a beef-steak pudding ! " cried Tom, slapping his legs to give the greater force to this reply.

" Yes, dear, that's excellent ! But if it should happen not to come quite right the first time," his sister faltered ; " if it should happen not to be a pudding exactly, but should turn out a stew, or a

soup, or something of that sort, you'll not be vexed, Tom, will you ? ”

The serious way in which she looked at Tom ; the way in which Tom looked at her ; and the way in which she gradually broke into a merry laugh at her own expense ; would have enchanted you.

“ Why,” said Tom, “ this is capital. It gives us a new, and quite an uncommon interest in the dinner. We put into a lottery for a beef-steak pudding, and it is impossible to say what we may get. We may make some wonderful discovery, perhaps, and produce such a dish as never was known before.”

“ I shall not be at all surprised if we do, Tom,” returned his sister, still laughing merrily, “ or if it should prove to be such a dish as we shall not feel very anxious to produce again ; but, the meat must come out of the saucepan at last, somehow or other, you know. We can't cook it into nothing at all ; that's a great comfort. So if you like to venture, I will.”

“ I have not the least doubt,” rejoined Tom, “ that it will come out an excellent pudding ; or at all events, I am sure that I shall think it so. There is naturally something so handy and brisk about you, Ruth, that if you said you could make a bowl of faultless turtle soup, I should believe you.”

And Tom was right. She was precisely that sort of person. Nobody ought to have been able to resist her coaxing manner ; and nobody had any business to try. Yet she never seemed to know it was her manner at all. That was the best of it.

Well ! she washed up the breakfast cups, chattering away the whole time, and telling Tom all sorts of anecdotes about the brass-and-copper funder ; put everything in its place ; made the room as neat as

herself—you must not suppose its shape was half as neat as her though, or anything like it—and brushed Tom's old hat round and round and round again, until it was as sleek as Mr. Pecksniff. Then she discovered, all in a moment, that Tom's shirt-collar was frayed at the edge; and flying upstairs for a needle and thread, came flying down again with her thimble on, and set it right with wonderful expertness; never once sticking the needle into his face, although she was humming his pet tune from first to last, and beating time with the fingers of her left hand upon his neckcloth. She had no sooner done this, than off she was again; and there she stood once more, as brisk and busy as a bee, tying that compact little chin of hers into an equally compact little bonnet, intent on bustling out to the butcher's, without a minute's loss of time; and inviting Tom to come and see the steak cut with his own eyes. As to Tom, he was ready to go anywhere; so off they trotted, arm in arm, as nimbly as you please, saying to each other what a quiet street it was to lodge in, and how very cheap, and what an airy situation.

To see the butcher slap the steak, before he laid it on the block, and give his knife a sharpening was to forget breakfast instantly. It was agreeable, too—it really was—to see him cut it off, so smooth and juicy. There was nothing savage in the act, although the knife was large and keen; it was a piece of art, high art; there was a delicacy of touch, clearness of tone, skilful handling of the subject, fine shading. It was the triumph of mind over matter; quite.

Perhaps the greenest cabbage-leaf ever grown in a garden was wrapped about this steak, before it was delivered over to Tom. But the butcher had a sentiment for his business, and knew how to refine

upon it. When he saw Tom putting the cabbage-leaf into his pocket awkwardly, he begged to be allowed to do it for him; "for meat," he said, with some emotion, "must be humoured, not drove."

Back they went to the lodgings again, after they had bought some eggs, and flour, and such small matters; and Tom sat gravely down to write, at one end of the parlour table, while Ruth prepared to make the pudding at the other end; for there was nobody in the house but an old woman (the landlord being a mysterious sort of man, who went out early in the morning, and was scarcely ever seen); and, saving in mere household drudgery, they waited on themselves.

"What are you writing, Tom?" inquired his sister, laying her hand upon his shoulder.

"Why, you see, my dear," said Tom, leaning back in his chair, and looking up in her face, "I am very anxious, of course, to obtain some suitable employment; and before Mr. Westlock comes this afternoon, I think I may as well prepare a little description of myself and my qualifications; such as he could show to any friend of his."

"You had better do the same for me, Tom, also," said his sister, casting down her eyes. "I should dearly like to keep house for you, and take care of you always, Tom; but we are not rich enough for that."

"We are not rich," returned Tom, "certainly; and we may be much poorer. But we will not part, if we can help it. No, no; we will make up our minds, Ruth, that, unless we are so very unfortunate as to render me quite sure that you would be better off away from me than with me, we will battle it out together. I am certain we shall be happier if we

can battle it out together. Don't you think we shall?"

"Think, Tom!"

"Oh, tut, tut!" interposed Tom tenderly. "You mustn't cry."

"No, no; I won't, Tom. But you can't afford it, dear. You can't indeed."

"We don't know that," said Tom. "How are we to know that, yet awhile, and without trying? Lord bless my soul!" Tom's energy became quite grand. "There is no knowing what may happen, if we try hard. And I am sure we can live contentedly upon a very little—if we can only get it."

"Yes; that I am sure we can, Tom."

"Why, then," said Tom, "we must try for it. My friend, John Westlock, is a capital fellow, and very shrewd and intelligent. I'll take his advice. We'll talk it over with him—both of us together. You'll like John very much, when you come to know him, I am certain. Don't cry, don't cry. *You* make a beef-steak pudding, indeed!" said Tom, giving her a gentle push. "Why, you haven't boldness enough for a dumpling!"

"You *will* call it a pudding, Tom. Mind! I told you not!"

"I may as well call it that, till it proves to be something else," said Tom. "Oh, you are going to work in earnest, are you?"

Ay, ay! That she was. And in such pleasant earnest, moreover, that Tom's attention wandered from his writing every moment. First, she tripped downstairs into the kitchen for the flour, then for the pie-board, then for the eggs, then for the butter, then for a jug of water, then for the rolling-pin, then for a pudding basin, then for the pepper, then for the salt:

making a separate journey for everything, and laughing every time she started off afresh. When all the materials were collected, she was horrified to find she had no apron on, and so ran *upstairs*, by way of variety, to fetch it. She didn't put it on upstairs, but came dancing down with it in her hand; and being one of those little women to whom an apron is a most becoming little vanity, it took an immense time to arrange; having to be carefully smoothed down beneath—O Heaven, what a wicked little stomacher! and to be gathered up into little plaits by the strings before it could be tied, and to be tapped, rebuked, and wheedled at the pockets, before it would set right, which at last it did, and when it did—but never mind; this is a sober chronicle. And then, there were her cuffs to be tucked up, for fear of flour; and she had a little ring to pull off her finger, which wouldn't come off (foolish little ring!); and during the whole of these preparations she looked demurely every now and then at Tom, from under her dark eyelashes, as if they were all a part of the pudding, and indispensable to its composition.

For the life and soul of him Tom could get no further in his writing than "A respectable young man, aged thirty-five," and this notwithstanding the show she made of being supernaturally quiet, and going about on tiptoe, lest she should disturb him; which only served as an additional means of distracting his attention, and keeping it upon her.

"Tom," she said at last, in high glee. "Tom!"

"What now?" said Tom, repeating to himself, "aged thirty-five!"

"Will you look here a moment, please?"

As if he hadn't been looking all the time!

"I am going to begin, Tom. Don't you wonder

why I butter the inside of the basin?" said his busy little sister.

"Not more than you do, I daresay," replied Tom laughing. "For I believe you don't know anything about it."

"What an infidel you are, Tom! How else do you think it would turn out easily when it was done? For a civil-engineer and land-surveyor not to know that! My goodness, Tom!"

It was wholly out of the question to try to write. Tom lined out "A respectable young man, aged thirty-five;" and sat looking on, pen in hand, with one of the most loving smiles imaginable.

Such a busy little woman as she was! So full of self-importance, and trying so hard not to smile, or seem uncertain about anything! It was a perfect treat to Tom to see her with her brows knit, and her rosy lips pursed up, kneading away at the crust, rolling it out, cutting it up into strips, lining the basin with it, shaving it off fine round the rim, chopping up the steak into small pieces, raining down pepper and salt upon them, packing them into the basin, pouring in cold water for gravy, and never venturing to steal a look in his direction, lest her gravity should be disturbed; until, at last, the basin being quite full and only wanting the top crust, she clapped her hands, all covered with paste and flour, at Tom, and burst out heartily into such a charming little laugh of triumph, that the pudding need have had no other seasoning to commend it to the taste of any reasonable man on earth.

"Where's the pudding?" said Tom. For he was cutting his jokes, Tom was.

"Where!" she answered, holding it up with both hands. "Look at it!"

“*That a pudding!*” said Tom.

“It will be, you stupid fellow, when it’s covered in,” returned his sister. Tom still pretending to look incredulous, she gave him a tap on the head with the rolling-pin, and still laughing merrily, had returned to the composition of the top-crust, when she started and turned very red. Tom started too, for following her eyes, he saw John Westlock in the room.

“Why, my goodness, John! How did *you* come in?”

“I beg pardon,” said John—“your sister’s pardon especially—but I met an old lady at the street-door, who requested me to enter here; and as you didn’t hear me knock, and the door was open, I made bold to do so. I hardly know,” said John, with a smile, “why any of us should be disconcerted at my having accidentally intruded upon such an agreeable domestic occupation, so very agreeably and skilfully pursued; but I must confess that *I* am. Tom, will you kindly come to my relief?”

“Mr. John Westlock,” said Tom. “My sister.”

“I hope, that as the sister of so old a friend,” said John, laughing, “you will have the goodness to detach your first impressions of me from my unfortunate entrance.”

“My sister is not indisposed perhaps to say the same to you on her own behalf,” retorted Tom.

John said, of course, that this was quite unnecessary, for he had been transfixed in silent admiration; and he held out his hand to Miss Pinch; who couldn’t take it, however, by reason of the flour and paste upon her own. This, which might seem calculated to increase the general confusion and render matters worse, had in reality the best effect in the world, for neither of them could help laughing;

and so they both found themselves on easy terms immediately.

"I am delighted to see you," said Tom. "Sit down."

"I can only think of sitting down on one condition," returned his friend; "and that is that your sister goes on with the pudding, as if you were still alone."

"That I am sure she will," said Tom. "On one other condition, and that is, that you stay and help us to eat it."

Poor little Ruth was seized with a palpitation of the heart when Tom committed this appalling indiscretion, for she felt that if the dish turned out a failure, she never would be able to hold up her head before John Westlock again. Quite unconscious of her state of mind, John accepted the invitation with all imaginable heartiness; and after a little more pleasantry concerning this same pudding, and the tremendous expectations he made believe to entertain of it, she blushing resumed her occupation, and he took a chair.

"I am here much earlier than I intended, Tom; but I will tell you what brings me, and I think I can answer for your being glad to hear it. Is that anything you wish to show me?"

"Oh, dear no!" cried Tom, who had forgotten the blotted scrap of paper in his hand, until this inquiry brought it to his recollection. "'A respectable young man, aged thirty-five'— The beginning of a description of myself. That's all."

"I don't think you will have occasion to finish it, Tom. But how is it you never told me you had friends in London?"

Tom looked at his sister with all his might; and

certainly his sister looked with all her might at him.

"Friends in London!" echoed Tom.

"Ah!" said Westlock, "to be sure."

"Have *you* any friends in London, Ruth, my dear?" asked Tom.

"No, Tom."

"I am very happy to hear that *I* have," said Tom; "but it's news to me. I never knew it. They must be capital people to keep a secret, John."

"You shall judge for yourself," returned the other. "Seriously, Tom, here is the plain state of the case. As I was sitting at breakfast this morning, there comes a knock at my door."

"On which you cried out, very loud, 'Come in!'" suggested Tom.

"So I did. And the person who knocked, not being a respectable young man, aged thirty-five, from the country, came in when he was invited, instead of standing gaping and staring about him on the landing. Well! When he came in, I found he was a stranger; a grave, business-like, sedate-looking stranger. 'Mr. Westlock?' said he. 'That is my name,' said I. 'The favour of a few words with you?' said he. 'Pray be seated, sir,' said I."

Here John stopped for an instant, to glance towards the table, where Tom's sister, listening attentively, was still busy with the basin, which by this time made a noble appearance. Then he resumed,—

"The pudding having taken a chair, Tom——"

"What!" cried Tom.

"Having taken a chair."

"You said a pudding."

"No, no," replied John, colouring rather; "a

chair. The idea of a stranger coming into my rooms at half-past eight o'clock in the morning, and taking a pudding! Having taken a chair, Tom, a chair—amazed me by opening the conversation thus: 'I believe you are acquainted, sir, with Mr. Thomas Pinch?' "

"No!" cried Tom.

"His very words, I assure you. I told him I was. Did I know where you were at present residing? Yes. In London? Yes. He had casually heard, in a roundabout way, that you had left your situation with Mr. Pecksniff. Was that the fact? Yes, it was. Did you want another? Yes, you did."

"Certainly," said Tom, nodding his head.

"Just what I impressed upon him. You may rest assured that I set that point beyond the possibility of any mistake, and gave him distinctly to understand that he might make up his mind about it. Very well."

"Then," said he, 'I think I can accommodate him.' "

Tom's sister stopped short.

"Lord bless me!" cried Tom. "Ruth, my dear, 'think I can accommodate him.' "

"Of course I begged him," pursued John Westlock, glancing at Tom's sister, who was not less eager in her interest than Tom himself, "to proceed, and said that I would undertake to see you immediately. He replied that he had very little to say, being a man of few words, but such as it was, it was to the purpose. And so, indeed, it turned out; for he immediately went on to tell me that a friend of his was in want of a kind of secretary and librarian; and that although the salary was small, being only a hundred pounds a year, with neither board nor

lodging, still the duties were not heavy, and there the post was. Vacant, and ready for your acceptance."

"Good-gracious me!" cried Tom; "a hundred pounds a year! My dear John! Ruth, my love! A hundred pounds a year!"

"But the strangest part of the story," resumed John Westlock, laying his hand on Tom's wrist, to bespeak his attention, and repress his ecstasies for the moment; "the strangest part of the story, Miss Pinch, is this. I don't know this man from Adam; neither does this man know Tom."

"He can't," said Tom, in great perplexity, "if he's a Londoner. I don't know any one in London."

"And on my observing," John resumed, still keeping his hand upon Tom's wrist, "that I had no doubt he would excuse the freedom I took, in inquiring who directed him to me; how he came to know of the change which had taken place in my friend's position; and how he came to be acquainted with my friend's peculiar fitness for such an office as he had described; he drily said that he was not at liberty to enter into any explanations."

"Not at liberty to enter into any explanations!" repeated Tom, drawing a long breath.

"'I must be perfectly aware,' he said," John added, "'that to any person who had ever been in Mr. Pecksniff's neighbourhood, Mr. Thomas Pinch and his acquirements were as well known as the church steeple, or the Blue Dragon.'"

"The Blue Dragon!" repeated Tom, staring alternately at his friend and his sister.

"Ay; think of that! He spoke as familiarly of the Blue Dragon, I give you my word, as if he had been Mark Tapley. I opened my eyes, I can tell

you, when he did so ; but I could not fancy I had ever seen the man before, although he said, with a smile, ' You know the Blue Dragon, Mr. Westlock ; you kept it up there, once or twice, yourself.' Kept it up there ! So I did. You remember, Tom ? "

Tom nodded with great significance, and, falling into a state of deeper perplexity than before, observed that this was the most unaccountable and extraordinary circumstance he had ever heard of in his life.

" Unaccountable ? " his friend repeated. " I became afraid of the man. Though it was broad day, and bright sunshine, I was positively afraid of him. I declare I half suspected him to be a supernatural visitor, and not a mortal, until he took out a commonplace description of pocket-book, and handed me this card."

" Mr. Fips," said Tom, reading it aloud. " Austin Friars. Austin Friars sounds ghostly, John."

" Fips don't, I think," was John's reply. " But there he lives, Tom, and there he expects us to call this morning. And now you know as much of this strange incident as I do, upon my honour."

Tom's face, between his exultation in the hundred pounds a year, and his wonder at this narration, was only to be equalled by the face of his sister, on which there sat the very best expression of blooming surprise that any painter could have wished to see. What the beef-steak pudding would have come to, if it had not been by this time finished, astrology itself could hardly determine.

" Tom," said Ruth, after a little hesitation, " perhaps Mr. Westlock, in his friendship for you, knows more of this than he chooses to tell."

" No, indeed ! " cried John eagerly. " It is not so, I assure you. I wish it were. I cannot take

credit to myself, Miss Pinch, for any such thing. All that I know, or, so far as I can judge, am likely to know, I have told you."

"Couldn't you know more, if you thought proper?" said Ruth, scraping the pie-board industriously.

"No," retorted John. "Indeed, no. It is very ungenerous in you to be so suspicious of me, when I repose implicit faith in you. I have unbounded confidence in the pudding, Miss Pinch."

She laughed at this, but they soon got back into a serious vein, and discussed the subject with profound gravity. Whatever else was obscure in the business, it appeared to be quite plain that Tom was offered a salary of one hundred pounds a year; and this being the main point, the surrounding obscurity rather set it off than otherwise.

Tom, being in a great flutter, wished to start for Austin Friars instantly, but they waited nearly an hour, by John's advice, before they departed. Tom made himself as spruce as he could before leaving home, and when John Westlock, through the half-opened parlour door, had glimpses of that brave little sister brushing the collar of his coat in the passage, taking up loose stitches in his gloves, and hovering lightly around and about him, touching him up here and there in the height of her quaint, little, old-fashioned tidiness, he called to mind the fancy portraits of her on the wall of the Pecksniffian work-room, and decided with uncommon indignation that they were gross libels, and not half pretty enough; though, as hath been mentioned in its place, the artists always made those sketches beautiful, and he had drawn at least a score of them with his own hands.

"Tom," he said, as they were walking along, "I begin to think you must be somebody's son."

"I suppose I am," Tom answered in his quiet way.

"But I mean somebody's of consequence."

"Bless your heart," replied Tom, "my poor father was of no consequence, nor my mother either."

"You remember them perfectly, then?"

"Remember them? oh, dear, yes. My poor mother was the last. She died when Ruth was a mere baby, and then we both became a charge upon the savings of that good old grandmother I used to tell you of. You remember! Oh! There's nothing romantic in our history, John."

"Very well," said John, in quiet despair. "Then there is no way of accounting for my visitor of this morning. So we'll not try, Tom."

They did try, notwithstanding, and never left off trying until they got to Austin Friars, where, in a very dark passage on the first floor, oddly situated at the back of a house, across some leads, they found a little blear-eyed glass door up in one corner, with Mr. Fips painted on it in characters which were meant to be transparent. There was also a wicked old sideboard hiding in the gloom hard by, meditating designs upon the ribs of visitors; and an old mat, worn into lattice work, which, being useless as a mat (even if anybody could have seen it, which was impossible), had for many years directed its industry into another channel, and regularly tripped up every one of Mr. Fips's clients.

Mr. Fips, hearing a violent concussion between a human hat and his office door, was apprised, by the usual means of communication, that somebody had come to call upon him, and giving that somebody admission, observed that it was "rather dark."

"Dark indeed," John whispered in Tom Pinch's ear. "Not a bad place to dispose of a countryman in, I should think, Tom."

Tom had been already turning over in his mind the possibility of their having been tempted into that region to furnish forth a pie; but the sight of Mr. Fips, who was small and spare, and looked peaceable, and wore black shorts and powder, dispelled his doubts.

"Walk in," said Mr. Fips.

They walked in. And a mighty yellow-jaundiced little office Mr. Fips had of it; with a great, black, sprawling splash upon the floor in one corner, as if some old clerk had cut his throat there, years ago, and had let out ink instead of blood.

"I have brought my friend, Mr. Pinch, sir," said John Westlock.

"Be pleased to sit," said Mr. Fips.

They occupied the two chairs, and Mr. Fips took the office stool, from the stuffing whereof he drew forth a piece of horsehair of immense length, which he put into his mouth with a great appearance of appetite.

He looked at Tom Pinch curiously, but with an entire freedom from any such expression as could be reasonably construed into an unusual display of interest. After a short silence, during which Mr. Fips was so perfectly unembarrassed as to render it manifest that he could have broken it sooner without hesitation, if he had felt inclined to do so, he asked if Mr. Westlock had made his offer fully known to Mr. Pinch.

John answered in the affirmative.

— "And you think it worth your while, sir, do you?" Mr. Fips inquired of Tom.

"I think it a piece of great good fortune, sir," said Tom. "I am exceedingly obliged to you for the offer."

"Not to me," said Mr. Fips. "I act upon instructions."

"To your friend, sir, then," said Tom. "To the gentleman with whom I am to engage, and whose confidence I shall endeavour to deserve. When he knows me better, sir, I hope he will not lose his good opinion of me. He will find me punctual and vigilant, and anxious to do what is right. That I think I can answer for, and so," looking towards him, "can Mr. Westlock."

"Most assuredly," said John.

Mr. Fips appeared to have some little difficulty in resuming the conversation. To relieve himself, he took up the wafer-stamp, and began stamping capital F's all over his legs.

"The fact is," said Mr. Fips, "that my friend is not, at this present moment, in town."

Tom's countenance fell; for he thought this equivalent to telling him that his appearance did not answer; and that Fips must look out for somebody else.

"When do you think he will be in town, sir?" he asked.

"I can't say; it's impossible to tell. I really have no idea. But," said Fips, taking off a very deep impression of the wafer-stamp upon the calf of his left leg, and looking steadily at Tom, "I don't know that it's a matter of much consequence."

Poor Tom inclined his head deferentially, but appeared to doubt that.

"I say," repeated Mr. Fips, "that I don't know it's a matter of much consequence. The business

lies entirely between yourself and me, Mr. Pinch. With reference to your duties, I can set you going; and with reference to your salary, I can pay it. Weekly," said Mr Fips, putting down the wafer-stamp, and looking at John Westlock and Tom Pinch by turns, "weekly; in this office; at any time between the hours of four and five o'clock in the afternoon." As Mr. Fips said this, he made up his face as if he were going to whistle. But he didn't.

"You are very good," said Tom, whose countenance was now suffused with pleasure; "and nothing can be more satisfactory or straightforward. My attendance will be required——"

"From half-past nine to four o'clock or so, I should say," interrupted Mr. Fips. "About that."

"I did not mean the hours of attendance," retorted Tom, "which are light and easy, I am sure; but the place."

"Oh, the place! The place is in the Temple."

Tom was delighted.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Fips, "you would like to see the place?"

"Oh, dear!" cried Tom. "I shall only be too glad to consider myself engaged, if you will allow me; without any further reference to the place."

"You may consider yourself engaged, by all means," said Mr. Fips. "You couldn't meet me at the Temple Gate in Fleet Street, in an hour from this time, I suppose, could you?"

Certainly Tom could.

"Good," said Mr. Fips, rising. "Then I will show you the place; and you can begin your attendance to-morrow morning. In an hour, therefore, I shall see you. You, too, Mr. Westlock? Very good. Take care how you go. It's rather dark."

With this remark, which seemed superfluous, he shut them out upon the staircase, and they groped their way into the street again.

The interview had done so little to remove the mystery in which Tom's new engagement was involved, and had done so much to thicken it, that neither could help smiling at the puzzled looks of the other. They agreed, however, that the introduction of Tom to his new office and office companions could hardly fail to throw light upon the subject; and, therefore, postponed its further consideration until after the fulfilment of the appointment they had made with Mr. Fips.

After looking at John Westlock's chambers, and devoting a few spare minutes to the Boar's Head, they issued forth again to the place of meeting. The time agreed upon had not quite come; but Mr. Fips was already at the Temple Gate, and expressed his satisfaction at their punctuality.

He led the way through sundry lanes and courts, into one more quiet and more gloomy than the rest, and, singling out a certain house, ascended a common staircase, taking from his pocket, as he went, a bunch of rusty keys. Stopping before a door upon an upper storey, which had nothing but a yellow smear of paint where custom would have placed the tenant's name, he began to beat the dust out of one of these keys, very deliberately, upon the great broad hand-rail of the balustrade.

"You had better have a little plug made," he said, looking round at Tom, after blowing a shrill whistle into the barrel of the key. "It's the only way of preventing them from getting stopped up. You'll find the lock go the better, too, I daresay, for a little oil."

Tom thanked him; but was too much occupied

with his own speculations, and John Westlock's looks, to be very talkative. In the meantime, Mr. Fips opened the door, which yielded to his hand very unwillingly, and with a horribly discordant sound. "He took the key out, when he had done so, and gave it to Tom.

"Ay, ay!" said Mr. Fips. "The dust lies rather thick here."

Truly, it did. Mr. Fips might have gone so far as to say, very thick. It had accumulated everywhere; lay deep on everything; and in one part, where a ray of sun shone through a crevice in the shutter and struck upon the opposite wall, it went twirling round and round, like a gigantic squirrel-cage.

Dust was the only thing in the place that had any motion about it. When their conductor admitted the light freely, and, lifting up the heavy window-sash, let in the summer air, he showed the mouldering furniture, discoloured wainscoting and ceiling, rusty stove, and ashy hearth, in all their inert neglect. Close to the door there stood a candlestick, with an extinguisher upon it, as if the last man who had been there had paused, after securing a retreat, to take a parting look at the dreariness he left behind, and then had shut out light and life together, and closed the place up like a tomb.

There were two rooms on that floor; and in the first or outer one a narrow staircase, leading to two more above. These last were fitted up as bed-chambers. Neither in them, nor in the rooms below, was any scarcity of convenient furniture observable, although the fittings were of a bygone fashion; but solitude and want of use seemed to have rendered it unfit for any purposes of comfort, and to have given it a grisly, haunted air.

Movables of every kind lay strewn about, without the least attempt at order, and were intermixed with boxes, hampers, and all sorts of lumber. On all the floors were piles of books, to the amount, perhaps, of some thousands of volumes; these, still in bales; those, wrapped in paper, as they had been purchased; others scattered singly or in heaps; not one upon the shelves which lined the walls. To these Mr. Fips called Tom's attention.

"Before anything else can be done, we must have them put in order, catalogued, and ranged upon the book-shelves, Mr. Pinch. That will do to begin with, I think, sir."

Tom rubbed his hands in the pleasant anticipation of a task so congenial to his taste, and said,—

"An occupation full of interest for me, I assure you. It will occupy me, perhaps, until Mr. ——"

"Until Mr. ——" repeated Fips; as much as to ask Tom what he was stopping for.

"I forgot that you had not mentioned the gentleman's name," said Tom.

"Oh!" cried Mr. Fips, pulling on his glove, "didn't I? No, by the bye, I don't think I did. Ah! I daresay he'll be here soon. You will get on very well together, I have no doubt. I wish you success, I am sure. You won't forget to shut the door? It'll lock of itself if you slam it. Half-past nine, you know. Let us say from half-past nine to four, or half-past four, or thereabouts; one day, perhaps, a little earlier, another day, perhaps, a little later, according as you feel disposed, and as you arrange your work. Mr. Fips, Austin Friars, of course you'll remember? And you won't forget to slam the door, if you please?"

He said all this in such a comfortable, easy manner, that Tom could only rub his hands, and nod his head, and smile in acquiescence, which he was still doing when Mr. Fips walked coolly out.

"Why, he's gone!" cried Tom.

"And what's more, Tom," said John Westlock, seating himself upon a pile of books, and looking up at his astonished friend, "he is evidently not coming back again; so here you are, installed. Under rather singular circumstances, Tom!"

It was such an odd affair throughout, and Tom standing there among the books, with his hat in one hand and the key in the other, looked so prodigiously confounded, that his friend could not help laughing heartily. Tom himself was tickled—no less by the hilarity of his friend than by the recollection of the sudden manner in which he had been brought to a stop, in the very height of his urbane conference with Mr. Fips; so, by degrees, Tom burst out laughing too; and each making the other laugh more, they fairly roared.

When they had had their laugh out, which did not happen very soon, for, give John an inch that way, and he was sure to take several ells, being a jovial, good-tempered fellow, they looked about them more closely, groping among the lumber for any stray means of enlightenment that might turn up. But no scrap or shred of information could they find. The books were marked with a variety of owners' names, having, no doubt, been bought at sales, and collected here and there at different times; but whether any one of these names belonged to Tom's employer, and, if so, which of them, they had no means whatever of determining. It occurred to John as a very bright thought, to make inquiry at the

steward's office, to whom the chambers belonged, or by whom they were held; but he came back no wiser than he went, the answer being, "Mr. Fips, of Austin Friars."

"After all, Tom, I begin to think it lies no deeper than this. Fips is an eccentric man; has some knowledge of Pecksniff; despises him, of course; has heard or seen enough of you to know that you are the man he wants; and engages you in his own whimsical manner."

"But why in his own whimsical manner?" asked Tom.

"Oh! why does any man entertain his own whimsical taste? Why does Mr. Fips wear shorts and powder, and Mr. Fips's next-door neighbour boots and a wig?"

Tom, being in that state of mind in which any explanation is a great relief, adopted this last one (which, indeed, was quite as feasible as any other) readily, and said he had no doubt of it. Nor was his faith at all shaken by his having said exactly the same thing to each suggestion of his friend's, in turn, and being perfectly ready to say it again if he had any new solution to propose.

As he had not, Tom drew down the window-sash, and folded the shutter; and they left the rooms. He closed the door heavily, as Mr. Fips had desired him; tried it, found it all safe, and put the key in his pocket.

They made a pretty wide circuit in going back to Islington, as they had time to spare, and Tom was never tired of looking about him. It was well he had John Westlock for his companion, for most people would have been weary of his perpetual stoppages at shop-windows, and his frequent dashes into the crowded carriage-way at the peril of his

life, to get the better view of church steeples and other public buildings. But John was charmed to see him so much interested, and every time Tom came back with a beaming face from among the wheels of carts and hackney-coaches, wholly unconscious of the personal congratulations addressed to him by the drivers, John seemed to like him better than before.

There was no flour on Ruth's hands when she received them in the triangular parlour, but there were pleasant smiles upon her face and a crowd of welcomes shining out of every smile, and gleaming in her bright eyes. By the bye, how bright they were! Looking into them for but a moment, when you took her hand, you saw, in each, such a capital miniature of yourself, representing you as such a restless, flashing, eager, brilliant little fellow—

Ah! if you could only have kept them for your own miniature! But, wicked, roving, restless, too impartial eyes, it was enough for any one to stand before them, and straightway, there he danced and sparkled quite as merrily as you!

The table was already spread for dinner; and though it was spread with nothing very choice in the way of glass or linen, and with green-handled knives, and very mountebanks of two-pronged forks, which seemed to be trying how far asunder they could possibly stretch their legs without converting themselves into double the number of iron toothpicks, it wanted neither damask, silver, gold, nor china; no, nor any other garniture at all. There it was; and, being there, nothing else would have done as well.

The success of that initiative dish—that first experiment of hers in cookery—was so entire, so unalloyed and perfect, that John Westlock and Tom agreed she must have been studying the art in secret

for a long time past ; and urged her to make a full confession of the fact. They were exceeding merry over this jest, and many smart things were said concerning it ; but John was not as fair in his behaviour as might have been expected, for, after luring Tom Pinch on, for a long time, he suddenly went over to the enemy, and swore to everything his sister said. However, as Tom observed the same night before going to bed, it was only in joke, and John had always been famous for being polite to ladies even when he was quite a boy. Ruth said, " Oh ! indeed ! " She didn't say anything else.

It is astonishing how much three people may find to talk about. They scarcely left off talking once. And it was not all lively chat which occupied them ; for, when Tom related how he had seen Mr. Pecksniff's daughters, and what a change had fallen on the younger, they were very serious.

John Westlock became quite absorbed in her fortunes ; asking many questions of Tom Pinch about her marriage, inquiring whether her husband was a gentleman whom Tom had brought to dine with him at Salisbury ; in what degree of relationship they stood towards each other, being different persons ; and taking, in short, the greatest interest in the subject. Tom then went into it at full length ; he told how Martin had gone abroad, and had not been heard of for a long time ; how Dragon Mark had borne him company ; how Mr. Pecksniff had got the poor old doting grandfather into his power ; and how he basely sought the hand of Mary Graham. But not a word said Tom of what lay hidden in his heart—his heart, so deep, and true, and full of honour, and yet with so much room for every gentle and unselfish thought ; not a word.

Tom, Tom! The man in all this world most confident in his sagacity and shrewdness; the man in all this world most proud of his distrust of other men, and having most to show in gold and silver as the gains belonging to his creed; the meekest favourer of that wise doctrine, Every man for himself, and God for us all (there being high wisdom in the thought that the Eternal Majesty of Heaven ever was, or can be, on the side of selfish lust and love!); shall never find, oh, never find, be sure of that, the time come home to him, when all his wisdom is an idiot's folly, weighed against a simple heart!

Well, well, Tom, it was simple too, though simple in a different way, to be so eager touching that same theatre, of which John said, when tea was done, he had the absolute command, so far as taking parties in without the payment of a sixpence was concerned; and simpler yet, perhaps, never to suspect that when he went in first, alone, he paid the money! Simple in thee, dear Tom, to laugh and cry so heartily, at such a sorry show, so poorly shown; simple, to be so happy and loquacious trudging home with Ruth; simple, to be so surprised to find that merry present of a cookery-book awaiting her in the parlour next morning, with the beef-steak-pudding-leaf turned down, and blotted out. There! Let the record stand! Thy quality of soul was simple, simple; quite contemptible, Tom Pinch!

THE RETURN OF MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT AND MARK TAPLEY.

On the night of the storm, Mrs. Lupin, hostess of the Blue Dragon, sat by herself in her little bar. Her solitary condition, or the bad weather, or both united, made Mrs. Lupin thoughtful, not to say sorrowful.

As she sat with her chin upon her hand, looking out through a low back lattice, rendered dim in the brightest daytime by clustering vine-leaves, she shook her head very often, and said, "Dear me! Ah, dear, dear me!"

It was a melancholy time, even in the snugness of the Dragon bar. The rich expanse of corn-field, pasture-land, green slope, and gentle undulation, with its sparkling brooks, its many hedgerows, and its clumps of beautiful trees, was black and dreary, from the diamond panes of the lattice away to the far horizon, where the thunder seemed to roll along the hills. The heavy rain beat down the tender branches of vine and jessamine, and trampled on them in its fury; and when the lightning gleamed, it showed the tearful leaves shivering and cowering together at the window, and tapping at it urgently, as if beseeching to be sheltered from the dismal night.

As a mark of her respect for the lightning, Mrs. Lupin had removed her candle to the chimney-piece. Her basket of needlework stood unheeded at her elbow; her supper, spread on a round table not far off, was untasted; and the knives had been removed for fear of attraction. She had sat for a long time with her chin upon her hand, saying to herself at intervals, "Dear me! Ah, dear, dear me!"

She was on the eve of saying so, once more, when the latch of the house-door (closed to keep the rain out) rattled on its well-worn catch, and a traveller came in, who, shutting it after him, and walking straight up to the half-door of the bar, said, rather gruffly,—

"A pint of the best old beer here."

He had some reason to be gruff, for if he had passed the day in a waterfall, he could scarcely have

been wetter than he was. He was wrapped up to the eyes in a rough blue sailor's coat, and had an oilskin hat on, from the capacious brim of which the rain fell trickling down upon his breast, and back, and shoulders. Judging from a certain liveliness of chin—he had so pulled down his hat, and pulled up his coat collar to defend himself from the weather, that she could only see his chin, and even across that he drew the wet sleeve of his shaggy coat, as she looked at him—Mrs. Lupin set him down for a good-natured fellow, too.

“A bad night!” observed the hostess cheerfully.

The traveller shook himself like a Newfoundland dog, and said it was, rather.

“There’s a fire in the kitchen,” said Mrs. Lupin, “and very good company there. Hadn’t you better go and dry yourself?”

“No, thankee,” said the man, glancing towards the kitchen as he spoke; he seemed to know the way.

“It’s enough to give you your death of cold,” observed the hostess.

“I don’t take my death easy,” returned the traveller; “or I should most likely have took it afore to-night. Your health, ma’am!”

Mrs. Lupin thanked him; but in the act of lifting the tankard to his mouth, he changed his mind, and put it down again. Throwing his body back, and looking about him stiffly, as a man does who is wrapped up, and has his hat low down over his eyes, he said,—

“What do you call this house? Not the Dragon, do you?”

Mrs. Lupin complacently made answer, “Yes, the Dragon.”

“Why, then, you’ve got a sort of relation of

mine here, ma'am," said the traveller; "a young man of the name of Tapley. What! Mark, my boy!" apostrophising the premises, "have I come upon you at last, old buck!"

This was touching Mrs. Lupin on a tender point. She turned to trim the candle on the chimney-piece and said, with her back towards the traveller,—

"Nobody should be made more welcome at the Dragon, master, than any one who brought me news of Mark. But it's many and many a long day and month since he left here and England. And whether he's alive or dead, poor fellow, Heaven above us only knows!"

She shook her head, and her voice trembled; her hand must have done so too, for the light required a deal of trimming.

"Where did he go, ma'am?" asked the traveller, in a gentler voice.

"He went," said Mrs. Lupin, with increased distress, "to America. He was always tender-hearted and kind, and perhaps at this moment may be lying in prison under sentence of death, for taking pity on some miserable black, and helping the poor runaway creetur to escape. How could he ever go to America! Why didn't he go to some of those countries where the savages eat each other fairly and give an equal chance to every one!"

Quite subdued by this time, Mrs. Lupin sobbed, and was retiring to a chair to give her grief vent, when the traveller caught her in his arms, and she uttered a glad cry of recognition.

"Yes, I will!" cried Mark, "another—one more—twenty more! You didn't know me in that hat and coat? I thought you would have known me anywheres! Ten more!"

“So I should have known you, if I could have seen you; but I couldn’t, and you spoke so gruff. I didn’t think you could speak gruff to me, Mark, at first coming back.”

“Fifteen more!” said Mr. Tapley. “How handsome and how young you look! Six more! The last half-dozen warn’t a fair one, and must be done over again. Lord bless you, what a treat it is to see you! One more! Well, I never was so jolly. Just a few more, on account of there not being any credit in it!”

When Mr. Tapley stopped in these calculations in simple addition, he did it, not because he was at all tired of the exercise, but because he was out of breath. The pause reminded him of other duties.

“Mr. Martin Chuzzlewit’s outside,” he said. “I left him under the cart-shed, while I came on to see if there was anybody here. We want to keep quiet to-night, till we know the news from you, and what it’s best for us to do.”

“There’s not a soul in the house, except the kitchen company,” returned the hostess. “If they were to know you had come back, Mark, they’d have a bonfire in the street, late as it is.”

“But they mustn’t know it to-night, my precious soul,” said Mark; “so have the house shut, and the kitchen fire made up; and when it’s all ready, put a light in the winder, and we’ll come in. One more! I long to hear about old friends. You’ll tell me all about ’em, won’t you? Mr Pinch, and the butcher’s dog down the street, and the terrier over the way, and the wheelwright’s, and every one of ’em. When I first caught sight of the church to-night, I thought the steeple would have choked

me, I did. One more! Won't you? Not a very little one to finish off with?"

"You have had plenty, I am sure," said the hostess. "Go along with your foreign manners!"

"That ain't foreign, bless you!" cried Mark. "Native as oysters, that is! One more, because it's native! As a mark of respect for the land we live in! This don't count as between you and me, you understand," said Mr. Tapley. "I ain't a-kissin' you now, you'll observe. I have been among the patriots; I'm a-kissin' my country."

It would have been very unreasonable to complain of the exhibition of his patriotism with which he followed up this explanation, that it was at all lukewarm or indifferent. When he had given full expression to his nationality, he hurried off to Martin; while Mrs. Lupin, in a state of great agitation and excitement, prepared for their reception.

The company soon came tumbling out; insisting to each other that the Dragon clock was half an hour too fast, and that the thunder must have affected it. Impatient, wet, and weary though they were, Martin and Mark were overjoyed to see these old faces, and watched them with delighted interest as they departed from the house, and passed close by them.

"There's the old tailor, Mark!" whispered Martin.

"There he goes, sir! A little bandier than he was, I think, sir, ain't he? His figure's so far altered, as it seems to me, that you might wheel a rather larger barrow between his legs as he walks, than you could have done conveniently when we know'd him. There's Sam a-coming out, sir."

"Ah, to be sure!" cried Martin—"Sam, the

hostler. I wonder whether that horse of Pecksniff's is alive still ? ”

“ Not a doubt on it, sir,” returned Mark. “ That’s a description of animal, sir, as will go on in a bony way peculiar to himself for a long time, and get into the newspapers at last under the title of ‘ Sing’lar Tenacity of Life in a Quadruped.’ As if he had ever been alive in all his life, worth mentioning ! There’s the clerk, sir, wery drunk as usual.”

“ I see him ! ” said Martin, laughing. “ But, my life, how wet you are, Mark ! ”

“ I am ! What do you consider yourself, sir ? ”

“ Oh, not half as bad,” said his fellow-traveller, with an air of great vexation. “ I told you not to keep on the windy side, Mark, but to let us change and change about. The rain has been beating on you ever since it began.”

“ You don’t know how it pleases me, sir,” said Mark, after a short silence—“ if I may make so bold as say so, to hear you a-going on in that there uncommon considerate way of yours ; which I don’t mean to attend to, never, but which, ever since that time when I was floored in Eden, you have showed.”

“ Ah, Mark ! ” sighed Martin, “ the less we say of that the better. Do I see the light yonder ? ”

“ That’s the light ! ” cried Mark. “ Lord bless her, what briskness she possesses ! Now for it, sir. Neat wines, good beds, and first-rate entertainment for man or beast.”

The kitchen fire burned clear and red, the table was spread out, the kettle boiled ; the slippers were there, the boot-jack too, sheets of ham were there, cooking on the gridiron ; half a dozen eggs were

there, poaching in the frying-pan ; a plethoric cherry-brandy bottle was there, winking at a foaming jug of beer upon the table ; rare provisions were there, dangling from the rafters as if you had only to open your mouth, and something exquisitely ripe and good would be glad of the excuse for tumbling into it. Mrs. Lupin, who for their sakes had dislodged the very cook, high priestess of the temple, with her own genial hands was dressing their repast.

It was impossible to help it—a ghost must have hugged her. The Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea being, in that respect, all one, Martin hugged her instantly. Mr. Tapley (as if the idea were quite novel, and had never occurred to him before) followed, with much gravity, on the same side.

"Little did I ever think," said Mrs. Lupin, adjusting her cap and laughing heartily ; yes, and blushing too ; "often as I have said that Mr. Peck-sniff's young gentlemen were the life and soul of the Dragon, and that without them it would be too dull to live in—little did I ever think, I am sure, that any one of them would ever make so free as you, Mr. Martin ! And still less that I shouldn't be angry with him, but should be glad with all my heart, to be the first to welcome him home from America, with Mark Tapley for his——"

"For his friend, Mrs. Lupin," interposed Martin.

"For his friend," said the hostess, evidently gratified by this distinction, but at the same time admonishing Mr. Tapley with a fork to remain at a respectful distance. "Little did I ever think that ! But still less, that I should ever have the changes to relate that I shall have to tell you of when you have done your supper !"

A SCENE FROM "NICHOLAS NICKLEBY"

NICHOLAS FINDS A FRIEND IN MR. VINCENT CRUMMLES

It was by this time within an hour of noon, and although a dense vapour still enveloped the city they had left—as if the very breath of its busy people hung over their schemes of gain and profit, and found greater attraction there than in the quiet region above—in the open country it was clear and fair. Occasionally, in some low spots they came upon patches of mist which the sun had not yet driven from their strongholds; but these were soon passed, and as they laboured up the hills beyond, it was pleasant to look down, and see how the sluggish mass rolled heavily off before the cheering influence of day. A broad, fine, honest sun lighted up the green pastures and dimpled water with the semblance of summer, while it left the travellers all the invigorating freshness of that early time of the year. The ground seemed elastic under their feet; the sheep-bells were music to their ears; and exhilarated by exercise, and stimulated by hope, they pushed onward with the strength of lions.

The day wore on, and all these bright colours subsided and assumed a quieter tint, like young hopes softened down by time, or youthful features by degrees resolving into the calm and serenity of age. But they were scarcely less beautiful in their slow decline than they had been in their prime; for nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own; and from morning to night, as from the cradle to the grave, it is but a succession of changes so gentle and easy, that we can scarcely mark their progress.

To Godalming they came at last, and here they bargained for two humble beds, and slept soundly. In the morning they were astir, though not quite so early as the sun, and again afoot; if not with all the freshness of yesterday, still with enough of hope and spirit to bear them cheerily on.

It was a harder day's journey than that they had already performed, for there were long and weary hills to climb; and in journeys, as in life, it is a great deal easier to go down hill than up. However, they kept on, with unabated perseverance; and the hill has not yet lifted its face to heaven that perseverance will not gain the summit of at last.

They walked upon the rim of the Devil's Punch Bowl; and Smike listened with greedy interest as Nicholas read the inscription upon the stone which, reared upon that wild spot, tells of a foul and treacherous murder committed there by night. The grass on which they stood had once been dyed with gore; and the blood of the murdered man had run down, drop by drop, into the hollow which gives the place its name. "The Devil's Bowl," thought Nicholas, as he looked into the void, "never held fitter liquor than that!"

Onward they kept, with steady purpose, and entered at length upon a wide and spacious tract of downs, with every variety of little hill and plain to change their verdant surface. Here there shot up, almost perpendicularly, into the sky, a height so steep as to be hardly accessible to any but the sheep and goats that fed upon its sides, and there stood a mound of green, sloping and tapering off so delicately, and merging so gently into the level ground, that you could scarce define its limits. Hills swelling

above each other; and undulations, shapely and uncouth, smooth and rugged, graceful and grotesque thrown negligently side by side, bounded the view in each direction; while frequently, with unexpected noise, there uprose from the ground a flight of crows, who, cawing and wheeling round the nearest hills, as if uncertain of their course, suddenly poised themselves upon the wing, and skimmed down the long vista of some opening valley with the speed of light itself.

By degrees the prospect receded more and more on either hand, and as they had been shut out from rich and extensive scenery, so they emerged once again upon the open country. The knowledge that they were drawing near their place of destination gave them fresh courage to proceed; but the way had been difficult, and they had loitered on the road, and SMIKE was tired. Thus, twilight had already closed in, when they turned off the path to the door of a roadside inn, yet twelve miles short of Portsmouth.

"Twelve miles," said Nicholas, leaning with both hands on his stick, and looking doubtfully at SMIKE.

"Twelve long miles," repeated the landlord.

"Is it a good road?" inquired Nicholas.

"Very bad," said the landlord. As of course, being a landlord, he would say.

"I want to get on," observed Nicholas, hesitating. "I scarcely know what to do."

"Don't let me influence you," rejoined the landlord. "I wouldn't go on if it was me."

"Wouldn't you?" asked Nicholas, with the same uncertainty.

"Not if I knew when I was well off," said the landlord. And having said it he pulled up his apron,

put his hands into his pockets, and, taking a step or two outside the door, looked down the dark road with an assumption of great indifference.

A glance at the toil-worn face of Smike determined Nicholas; so, without any further consideration, he made up his mind to stay where he was.

The landlord led them into the kitchen, and as there was a good fire he remarked that it was very cold. If there had happened to be a bad one he would have observed that it was very warm.

"What can you give us for supper?" was Nicholas's natural question.

"Why—what would you like?" was the landlord's no less natural answer.

Nicholas suggested cold meat, but there was no cold meat—poached eggs, but there were no eggs—mutton-chops, but there wasn't a mutton-chop within three miles, though there had been more last week than they knew what to do with, and would be an extraordinary supply the day after to-morrow.

"Then," said Nicholas, "I must leave it entirely to you, as I would have done at first if you had allowed me."

"Why, then, I'll tell you what," rejoined the landlord. "There's a gentleman in the parlour that's ordered a hot beefsteak pudding and potatoes at nine. There's more of it than he can manage, and I have very little doubt, if I ask leave, you can sup with him. I'll do that in a minute."

"No, no," said Nicholas, detaining him. "I would rather not. I—at least—pshaw! why cannot I speak out? Here; you see that I am travelling in a very humble manner, and have made my way hither on foot. It is more than probable, I think, that the gentleman may not relish my company;

and although I am the dusty figure you see, I am too proud to thrust myself into his."

"Lord love you," said the landlord, "it's only Mr. Crummles; *he* isn't particular."

"Is he not?" asked Nicholas, on whose mind, to tell the truth, the prospect of the savoury pudding was making some impression.

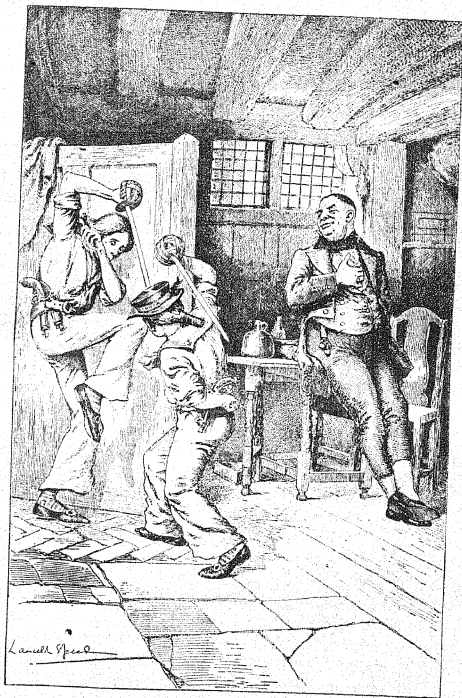
"Not he," replied the landlord. "He'll like your way of talking, I know. But we'll soon see all about that. Just wait a minute."

The landlord hurried into the parlour, without staying for further permission, nor did Nicholas strive to prevent him; wisely considering that supper, under the circumstances, was too serious a matter to trifle with. It was not long before the host returned, in a condition of much excitement.

"All right," he said, in a low voice. "I knew he would. You'll see something rather worth seeing in there. Ecod, how they are a-going of it!"

There was no time to inquire to what this exclamation, which was delivered in a very rapturous tone, referred; for he had already thrown open the door of the room; into which Nicholas, followed by Smike with the bundle on his shoulder (he carried it about with him as vigilantly as if it had been a sack of gold), straightway repaired.

Nicholas was prepared for something odd, but not for something quite so odd as the sight he encountered. At the upper end of the room were a couple of boys, one of them very tall and the other very short, both dressed as sailors—or at least as theatrical sailors, with belts, buckles, pigtails, and pistols complete—fighting what is called in playbills, a terrific combat, with two of those short broadswords with basket hilts which are commonly used at our minor theatres.



"THERE'S A PICTURE," SAID MR. CRUMMLES.

The short boy had gained a great advantage over the tall boy, who was reduced to mortal strait, and both were overlooked by a large, heavy man, perched against the corner of a table, who emphatically adjured them to strike a little more fire out of the swords, and they couldn't fail to bring the house down on the very first night.

"Mr. Vincent Crummles," said the landlord, with an air of great deference, "this is the young gentleman."

Mr. Vincent Crummles received Nicholas with an inclination of the head, something between the curtesy of a Roman emperor and the nod of a pot-companion; and bade the landlord shut the door and begone.

"There's a picture," said Mr. Crummles, motioning Nicholas not to advance and spoil it. "There the little 'un has him; if the big 'un doesn't knock under in three seconds, he's a dead man. Do that again, boys."

The two combatants went to work afresh, and chopped away until the swords emitted a shower of sparks; to the great satisfaction of Mr. Crummles, who appeared to consider this a very great point indeed. The engagement commenced with about two hundred chops administered by the short sailor and the tall sailor alternately, without producing any particular result, until the short sailor was chopped down on one knee; but this was nothing to him, for he worked himself about on the one knee with the assistance of his left hand, and fought most desperately until the tall sailor chopped his sword out of his grasp. Now, the inference was, that the short sailor, reduced to this extremity, would give in at once and cry quarter, but instead of that, he all of a sudden drew a large pistol from his belt and presented it at the face of the tall sailor, who was

so overcome at this (not expecting it) that he let the short sailor pick up his sword and begin again. Then the chopping recommenced, and a variety of fancy chops were administered on both sides; such as chops dealt with the left hand, and under the leg, and over the right shoulder, and over the left; and when the short sailor made a vigorous cut at the tall sailor's legs, which would have shaved them clean off if it had taken effect, the tall sailor jumped over the short sailor's sword, wherefore to balance the matter, and make it all fair, the tall sailor administered the same cut, and the short sailor jumped over *his* sword. After this, there was a good deal of dodging about, and hitching up of the inexpressibles in the absence of braces, and then the short sailor (who was the moral character evidently, for he always had the best of it) made a violent demonstration and closed with the tall sailor, who, after a few unavailing struggles, went down, and expired in great torture as the short sailor put his foot upon his breast, and bored a hole in him through and through.

"That'll be a double *en core* if you take care, boys," said Mr. Crummles. "You had better get your wind now, and change your clothes."

Having addressed these words to the combatants, he saluted Nicholas, who then observed that the face of Mr. Crummles was quite proportionate in size to his body; that he had a very full under-lip, a hoarse voice, as though he were in the habit of shouting very much, and very short, black hair, shaved off nearly to the crown of his head—to admit (as he afterwards learned) of his more easily wearing character wigs of any shape or pattern.

"What did you think of that, sir?" inquired Mr. Crummles.

"Very good, indeed—capital," answered Nicholas.

"You won't see such boys as those very often, I think," said Mr. Crummles.

Nicholas assented—observing that if they were a little better match——

"Match!" cried Mr. Crummles.

"I mean if they were a little more of a size," said Nicholas, explaining himself.

"Size!" repeated Mr. Crummles; "why, it's the essence of the combat that there should be a foot or two between them. How are you to get up the sympathies of the audience in a legitimate manner, if there isn't a little man contending against a big one—unless there's at least five to one, and we haven't hands enough for that business in our company."

"I see," replied Nicholas. "I beg your pardon. That didn't occur to me, I confess."

"It's the main point," said Mr. Crummles. "I open at Portsmouth the day after to-morrow. If you're going there, look into the theatre, and see how that'll tell."

Nicholas promised to do so if he could, and drawing a chair near the fire, fell into conversation with the manager at once. He was very talkative and communicative, stimulated, perhaps, not only by his natural disposition, but by the spirits and water he sipped very plentifully, or the snuff he took in large quantities from a piece of whity-brown paper in his waistcoat pocket. He laid open his affairs without the smallest reserve, and descanted at some length upon the merits of his company, and the acquirements of his family; of both of which the two broadsword boys formed an honourable portion. There was to be a gathering, it seemed, of the different ladies and gentlemen of Portsmouth on the morrow,

whither the father and sons were proceeding (not for the regular season, but in the course of a wandering speculation), after fulfilling an engagement at Guildford with the greatest applause.

"You are going that way?" asked the manager.

"Ye-yes," said Nicholas. "Yes, I am."

"Do you know the town at all?" inquired the manager, who seemed to consider himself entitled to the same degree of confidence as he had himself exhibited.

"No," replied Nicholas.

"Never there?"

"Never."

Mr. Vincent Crummles gave a short, dry cough, as much as to say, "if you won't be communicative, you won't;" and took so many pinches of snuff from the piece of paper, one after another, that Nicholas quite wondered where it all went to.

While he was thus engaged, Mr. Crummles looked, from time to time, with great interest at Smike, with whom he had appeared considerably struck from the first. He had now fallen asleep, and was nodding in his chair.

"Excuse my saying so," said the manager, leaning over to Nicholas, and sinking his voice, "but what a capital countenance your friend has got!"

"Poor fellow!" said Nicholas, with a half smile, "I wish it were a little more plump and less haggard."

"Plump!" exclaimed the manager, quite horrified, "you'd spoil it for ever."

"Do you think so?"

"Think so, sir! Why, as he is now," said the manager, striking his knee emphatically, "without a pad upon his body, and hardly a touch of paint upon his face, he'd make such an actor for the starved

business as was never seen in this country. Only let him be tolerably well up in the Apothecary in 'Romeo and Juliet,' with the slightest possible dab of red on the tip of his nose, and he'd be certain of three rounds the moment he put his head out of the practicable door in the front grooves O.P."

"You view him with a professional eye," said Nicholas, laughing.

"And well I may," rejoined the manager. "I never saw a young fellow so regularly cut out for that line since I've been in the profession, and I played the heavy children when I was eighteen months old."

The appearance of the beefsteak pudding, which came in simultaneously with the junior Vincent Crummleses, turned the conversation to other matters, and, indeed, for a time stopped it altogether. These two young gentlemen wielded their knives and forks with scarcely less address than their broadswords, and as the whole party were quite as sharp set as either class of weapons, there was no time for talking until the supper had been disposed of.

The Masters Crummles had no sooner swallowed the last procurable morsel of food than they evinced, by various half-suppressed yawns and stretchings of their limbs, an obvious inclination to retire for the night, which Smike had betrayed still more strongly; he having, in the course of the meal, fallen asleep several times while in the very act of eating. Nicholas therefore proposed that they should break up at once, but the manager would by no means hear of it, vowing that he had promised himself the pleasure of inviting his new acquaintance to share a bowl of punch, and that if he declined he should deem it very unhandsome behaviour.

"Let them go," said Mr. Vincent Crummles, "and we'll have it snugly and cosily together by the fire."

Nicholas was not much disposed to sleep, being, in truth, too anxious; so, after a little demur, he accepted the offer, and having exchanged a shake of the hand with the young Crummles, and the manager having on his part bestowed a most affectionate benediction on Smike, he sat himself down opposite to that gentleman by the fireside, to assist in emptying the bowl, which soon afterwards appeared, steaming in a manner which was quite exhilarating to behold, and sending forth a most grateful and inviting fragrance.

But despite the punch and the manager, who told a variety of stories, and smoked tobacco from a pipe, and inhaled it in the shape of snuff, with a most astonishing power, Nicholas was absent and dispirited. His thoughts were in his old home, and when they reverted to his present condition, the uncertainty of the morrow cast a gloom upon him, which his utmost efforts were unable to dispel. His attention wandered; although he heard the manager's voice, he was deaf to what he said; and when Mr. Vincent Crummles concluded the history of the adventure with a loud laugh, and an inquiry what Nicholas would have done under the same circumstances, he was obliged to make the best apology in his power, and to confess his entire ignorance of all he had been talking about.

"Why, so I saw," observed Mr. Crummles. "You're uneasy in your mind. What's the matter?"

Nicholas could not refrain from smiling at the abruptness of the question; but, thinking it scarcely worth while to parry it, owned that he was under some apprehensions lest he might not succeed in the

object which had brought him to that part of the country.

"And what's that?" asked the manager.

"Getting something to do which will keep me and my poor fellow-traveller in the common necessities of life," said Nicholas. "That's the truth. You guessed it long ago, I dare say, so I may as well have the credit of telling it you with a good grace."

"What's to be got to do at Portsmouth more than anywhere else?" asked Mr. Vincent Crummles, melting the sealing-wax on the stem of his pipe in the candle, and rolling it out afresh with his little finger.

"There are many vessels leaving the port, I suppose," replied Nicholas. "I shall try for a berth in some ship or other. There is meat and drink there, at all events."

"Salt meat and new rum; pease pudding and chaff biscuits," said the manager, taking a whiff at his pipe to keep it alight, and returning to his work of embellishment.

"One may do worse than that," said Nicholas. "I can rough it, I believe, as well as most men of my age and previous habits."

"You need be able to," said the manager, "if you go on board ship; but you won't."

"Why not?"

"Because there's not a skipper or mate that would think you worth your salt, when he could get a practised hand," replied the manager; "and they as plentiful there as the oysters in the streets."

"What do you mean?" asked Nicholas, alarmed by this prediction, and the confident tone in which

it had been uttered. "Men are not born able seamen. They must be reared, I suppose?"

Mr. Vincent Crummles nodded his head. "They must; but not at your age, or from young gentlemen like you."

There was a pause. The countenance of Nicholas fell, and he gazed ruefully at the fire.

"Does no other profession occur to you, which a young man of your figure and address could take up easily, and see the world to advantage in?" asked the manager.

"No," said Nicholas, shaking his head.

"Why, then, I'll tell you one," said Mr. Crummles, throwing his pipe into the fire, and raising his voice. "The stage."

"The stage!" cried Nicholas, in a voice almost as loud.

"The theatrical profession," said Mr. Vincent Crummles. "I am in the theatrical profession myself, my wife is in the theatrical profession, my children are in the theatrical profession. I had a dog that lived and died in it from a puppy; and my chaise-pony goes on in 'Timour the Tartar.' I'll bring you out, and your friend too. Say the word. I want a novelty."

"I don't know anything about it," rejoined Nicholas, whose breath had been almost taken away by this sudden proposal. "I never acted a part in my life, except at school."

"There's genteel comedy in your walk and manner, juvenile tragedy in your eye, and touch-and-go farce in your laugh," said Mr. Vincent Crummles. "You'll do as well as if you had thought of nothing else but the lamps from your birth downwards."

Nicholas thought of the small amount of small change that would remain in his pocket after paying the tavern bill, and he hesitated.

"You can be useful to us in a hundred ways," said Crummles. "Think what capital bills a man of your education could write for the shop windows."

"Well, I think I could manage that department," said Nicholas.

"To be sure you could," replied Mr. Crummles. "'For further particulars see small hand-bills'—we might have half a volume in every one of 'em. Pieces, too; why, you could write us a piece to bring out the whole strength of the company, whenever we wanted one."

"I am not quite so confident about that," replied Nicholas. "But I dare say I could scribble something now and then that would suit you."

"We'll have a new show-piece out directly," said the manager. "Let me see—peculiar resources of this establishment—new and splendid scenery—you must manage to introduce a real pump and two washing-tubs."

"Into the piece?" said Nicholas.

"Yes," replied the manager. "I bought 'em cheap, at a sale the other day, and they'll come in admirably. That's the London plan. They look up some dresses and properties, and have a piece written to fit them. Most of the theatres keep an author on purpose."

"Indeed!" cried Nicholas.

"Oh, yes," said the manager; "a common thing. It'll look very well in the bills in separate lines—Real pump!—Splendid tubs!—Great attraction! You don't happen to be anything of an artist, do you?"

"That is not one of my accomplishments," rejoined Nicholas.

"Ah! Then it can't be helped," said the manager. "If you had been, we might have had a large woodcut of the last scene for the posters, showing the whole depth of the stage, with the pump and tubs in the middle; but, however, if you're not, it can't be helped."

"What should I get for all this?" inquired Nicholas, after a few moments' reflection. "Could I live by it?"

"Live by it!" said the manager. "Like a prince! With your own salary, and your friend's, and your writings, you'd make a pound a week!"

"You don't say so!"

"I do, indeed; and, if we had a run of good houses, nearly double the money."

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders; but sheer destitution was before him; and if he could summon fortitude to undergo the extremes of want and hardship, for what had he rescued his helpless charge if it were only to bear as hard a fate as that from which he had wrested him? It was easy to think of seventy miles as nothing, when he was in the same town with the man who had treated him so ill and roused his bitterest thoughts; but now it seemed far enough. What if he went abroad, and his mother or Kate were to die the while?

Without more deliberation, he hastily declared that it was a bargain, and gave Mr. Vincent Crummles his hand upon it.

A SCENE FROM THE "OLD CURIOSITY SHOP"

THE TEACHER AND THE SICK SCHOLAR

SHORTLY after the schoolmaster had arranged the forms and taken his seat behind his desk, a small white-headed boy with a sunburnt face appeared at the door, and, stopping there to make a rustic bow, came in and took his seat upon one of the forms. He then put an open book, astonishingly dog-eared, upon his knees, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, began counting the marbles with which they were filled; displaying, in the expression of his face, a remarkable capacity of totally abstracting his mind from the spelling on which his eyes were fixed.

Soon afterward, another white-headed little boy came straggling in, and after him, a red-headed lad, and then one with a flaxen poll, until the forms were occupied by a dozen boys or thereabouts, with heads of every colour but gray, and ranging in their ages from four years old to fourteen years or more; for the legs of the youngest were a long way from the floor, when he sat upon the form; and the eldest was a heavy, good-tempered fellow, about half a head taller than the schoolmaster.

At the top of the first form—the post of honour in the school—was the vacant place of the little sick scholar; and, at the head of the row of pegs, on which those who wore hats or caps were wont to hang them, one was empty. No boy attempted to violate the sanctity of seat or peg, but many a one looked from the empty spaces to the schoolmaster, and whispered to his idle neighbour behind his hand.

Then began the hum of conning over lessons and

getting them by heart, the whispered jest and stealthy game, and all the noise and drawl of school; and in the midst of the din, sat the poor schoolmaster, vainly attempting to fix his mind upon the duties of the day, and to forget his little sick friend. But the tedium of his office reminded him more strongly of the willing scholar, and his thoughts were rambling from his pupils—it was plain.

None knew this better than the idlest boys, who, growing bolder with impunity, waxed louder and more daring; playing 'odd or even' under the master's eye; eating apples openly or without rebuke; pinching each other in sport or malice, without the least reserve; and cutting their initials in the very legs of his desk. The puzzled dunce who stood beside it to say his lesson "off the book," looked no longer at the ceiling for forgotten words, but drew closer to the master's elbow, and boldly cast his eye upon the page; the wag of the little troop squinted and made grimaces (at the smallest boy, of course), holding no book before his face, and his approving companions knew no constraint in their delight. If the master did chance to rouse himself, and seem alive to what was going on, the noise subsided for a moment, and no eye met his but wore a studious and deeply humble look; but the instant he relapsed again, it broke out afresh, and ten times louder than before.

Oh! how some of those idle fellows longed to be outside, and how they looked at the open door and window, as if they half meditated rushing violently out, plunging into the woods, and being wild boys and savages from that time forth. What rebellious thoughts of the cool river, and some shady bathing-place, beneath willow trees with branches dipping

in the water, kept tempting and urging that sturdy boy, who, with his shirt collar unbuttoned, and flung back as far as it could go, sat fanning his flushed face with a spelling-book, wishing himself a whale, or a minnow, or a fly, or anything but a boy at school, on that hot, broiling day.

Heat! ask that other boy, whose seat being nearest to the door, gave him opportunities of gliding out into the garden, and driving his companions to madness, by dipping his face into the bucket of the well, and then rolling on the grass,—ask him if there was ever such a day as that, when even the bees were diving deep down into the cups of the flowers, and stopping there, as if they had made up their minds to retire from business, and be manufacturers of honey no more. The day was made for laziness and lying on one's back in green places, and staring at the sky, till its brightness forced the gazer to shut his eyes and go to sleep. And was this the time to be poring over musty books in a dark room, slighted by the very sun itself? Monstrous!

The lessons over, writing time began. This was a more quiet time; for the master would come and look over the writer's shoulder, and mildly tell him to observe how such a letter was turned up in such a copy on the wall, which had been written by their sick companion, and bid him take it as a model. Then he would stop and tell them what the sick child had said last night, and how he had longed to be among them once again; and such was the poor schoolmaster's gentle and affectionate manner, that the boys seemed quite remorseful that they had worried him so much, and were absolutely quiet; eating no apples, cutting no names, and making no grimaces for full two minutes afterwards.

"I think, boys," said the schoolmaster, when the clock struck twelve, "that I shall give you an extra half-holiday this afternoon." At this intelligence, the boys, led on and headed by the tall boy, raised a great shout, in the midst of which the master was seen to speak, but could not be heard. As he held up his hand, however, in token of his wish that they should be silent, they were considerate enough to leave off, as soon as the longest-winded among them were quite out of breath. "You must promise me, first," said the schoolmaster, "that you'll not be noisy, or at least, if you are, that you'll go away first, out of the village, I mean. I'm sure you wouldn't disturb your old playmate and companion."

There was a general murmur (and perhaps a very sincere one, for they were but boys) in the negative; and the tall boy, perhaps as sincerely as any of them, called those about him to witness that he had only shouted in a whisper. "Then pray don't forget, there's my dear scholars," said the schoolmaster, "what I have asked you, and do it as a favour to me. Be as happy as you can, and don't be unmindful that you are blessed with health. Good-bye, all."

"Thank'ee, sir," and "Good-bye, sir," were said a great many times in a great variety of voices, and the boys went out very slowly and softly. But there was the sun shining and there were birds singing, as the sun only shines and the birds only sing on holidays and half-holidays; there were the trees waving to all free boys to climb and nestle among their leafy branches; the hay entreating them to come and scatter it in the pure air; the green corn, gently beckoning toward wood and stream; the smooth ground, rendered smoother still by blending lights and shadows, inviting to runs and leaps, and

long walks, nobody knows whither. It was more than boy could bear, and with a joyous whoop, the whole cluster took to their heels, and spread themselves about, shouting and laughing as they went. " 'Tis natural," said the schoolmaster, looking after them; "I am very glad they didn't mind me."

Toward night, the schoolmaster walked over to the cottage where his little friend lay sick. Knocking gently at the cottage door, it was opened without loss of time. He entered a room where a group of women were gathered about one who was wringing her hands, and crying bitterly. "O dame!" said the schoolmaster, drawing near her chair, "is it so bad as this?" Without replying, she pointed to another room, which the schoolmaster immediately entered; and there lay his little friend, half-dressed, stretched upon a bed.

He was a very young boy; quite a little child. His hair still hung in curls about his face, and his eyes were very bright; but their light was of heaven, not of earth. The schoolmaster took a seat beside him, and, stooping over the pillow whispered his name. The boy sprang up, stroked his face with his hand, and threw his wasted arms around his neck, crying, that he was his dear, kind friend. "I hope I always was. I meant to be, God knows," said the poor school aster. "You remember my garden, Henry?" whispered the old man, anxious to rouse him, for a dulness seemed gathering upon the child, "and how pleasant it used to be in the evening time? You must make haste to visit it again, for I think the very flowers have missed you, and are less gay than they used to be. You will come soon, very soon now, won't you?"

The boy smiled faintly—so very, very faintly—

and put his hand upon his friend's gray head. 'He moved his lips too, but no voice came from them—no, not a sound. In the silence that ensued, the hum of distant voices, borne upon the evening air, came floating through the open window. "What's that?" said the sick child, opening his eyes. "The boys at play, upon the green." He took a handkerchief from his pillow, and tried to wave it above his head. But the feeble arm dropped powerless down. "Shall I do it?" said the schoolmaster. "Please wave it at the window," was the faint reply. "Tie it to the lattice. Some of them may see it there. Perhaps they'll think of me and look this way."

He raised his head and glanced from the fluttering signal to his idle hat, that lay with slate, and book, and other boyish property, upon the table in the room. And then he laid him softly down once more; and again clasped his little arms around the old man's neck. The two old friends and companions—for such they were, though they were man and child—held each other in a long embrace, and then the little scholar turned his face to the wall and fell asleep.

The poor schoolmaster sat in the same place, holding the small, cold hand in his, and chafing it. It was but the hand of a dead child. He felt that; and yet he chafed it still, and could not lay it down.

SCENES FROM "GREAT EXPECTATIONS"

PIP LEARNS TO READ

Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt kept an evening school in the village; that is to say, she was a ridiculous

old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven every evening, in the society of youth who paid twopence per week each, for the improving opportunity of seeing her do it. She rented a small cottage, and Mr. Wopsle had the room upstairs, where we students used to overhear him reading aloud in a most dignified and terrific manner, and occasionally bumping on the ceiling. There was a fiction that Mr. Wopsle "examined" the scholars, once a quarter. What he did on those occasions was to turn up his cuffs, stick up his hair, and give us Mark Antony's oration over the body of Cæsar. This was always followed by Collins' Ode on the Passions, wherein I particularly venerated Mr. Wopsle as Revenge, throwing his blood-stained sword in thunder down, and taking the War-denouncing trumpet with a withering look. It was not with me then, as it was in later life, when I fell into the society of the Passions, and compared them with Collins and Wopsle, rather to the disadvantage of both gentlemen.

Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, besides keeping this Educational Institution, kept in the same room—a little general shop. She had no idea what stock she had, or what the price of anything in it was; but there was a little greasy memorandum-book kept in a drawer, which served as a Catalogue of Prices, and by this oracle Biddy arranged all the shop transactions. Biddy was Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt's granddaughter; I confess myself quite unequal to the working out of the problem, what relation she was to Mr. Wopsle. She was an orphan like myself; like me, too, had been brought up by hand. She was most noticeable, I thought, in respect of her extremities: for her hair always wanted brushing,

her hands always wanted washing, and her shoes always wanted mending and pulling up at heel. This description must be received with a week-day limitation. On Sundays she went to church elaborated.

Much of my unassisted self, and more by the help of Biddy than of Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, I struggled through the alphabet as if it had been a bramble-bush; getting considerably worried and scratched by every letter. After that, I fell among those thieves, the nine figures, who seemed every evening to do something new to disguise themselves and baffle recognition. But, at last I began, in a purblind groping way, to read, write, and cipher, on the very smallest scale.

One night, I was sitting in the chimney-corner with my slate, expending great efforts on the production of a letter to Joe. I think it must have been a full year after our hunt upon the marshes, for it was a long time after, and it was winter and a hard frost. With an alphabet on the hearth at my feet for reference, I contrived in an hour or two to print and smear this epistle:

"MI DEER JO i OPE U R KRWRITE WELL i OPE i SHAL SON B HABELL 4 2 TEEDGE U JO AN THEN WE SHORL B SO GLODD AN WEN i M PRENGTD 2 U JO WO'T LARX AN BLEVE ME inF xN PiP."

There was no indispensable necessity for my communicating with Joe by letter, inasmuch as he sat beside me and we were alone. But, I delivered this written communication (slate and all) with my own hand, and Joe received it, as a miracle of erudition.

"I say, Pip, old chap!" cried Joe, opening his blue eyes wide, "what a scholar you are! Ain't you?"

"I should like to be," said I, glancing at the

slate as he held it : with a misgiving that the writing was rather hilly.

"Why, here's a J," said Joe, "and a O equal to anything! Here's a J and a O, Pip, and a J-O, Joe."

I had never heard Joe read aloud to any greater extent than this monosyllable, and I had observed at church last Sunday, when I accidentally held our Prayer-book upside down, that it seemed to suit his convenience quite as well as if it had been all right. Wishing to embrace the present occasion of finding out whether in teaching Joe, I should have to begin quite at the beginning, I said, "Ah! But read the rest, Joe."

"The rest, eh, Pip?" said Joe, looking at it with a slowly searching eye. "One, two, three. Why, here's three Js, and three Os, and three J-O, Joes, in it, Pip!"

I leaned over Joe, and, with the aid of my forefinger, read him the whole letter.

"Astonishing!" said Joe, when I had finished. "You ARE a scholar."

"How do you spell Gargery, Joe?" I asked him, with a modest patronage.

"I don't spell it at all," said Joe.

"But supposing you did?"

"It *can't* be supposed," said Joe. "Tho' I'm uncommon fond of reading, too."

"Are you, Joe?"

"On-common. Give me," said Joe, "a good book, or a good newspaper, and sit me down afore a good fire, and I ask no better. Lord!" he continued, after rubbing his knees a little, "when you *do* come to a J and a O, and says you, 'Here, at last, is a J-O, Joe,' hōw interesting reading is!"

I derived from this last, that Joe's education, like Steam, was yet in its infancy. Pursuing the subject I inquired :

• "Didn't you ever go to school, Joe, when you were as little as me?"

"No, Pip."

"Why didn't you ever go to school, Joe, when you were as little as me?"

"Well, Pip," said Joe, taking up the poker, and settling himself to his usual occupation when he was thoughtful, of slowly raking the fire between the lower bars: "I'll tell you. My father, Pip, he were given to drink, and when he were overtook with drink, he hammered away at my mother most onmerciful. It were a'most the only hammering he did, indeed, 'cepting at myself. And he hammered at me with a wigour only to be equalled by the wigour with which he didn't hammer at his anwil.—You're a-listening and understanding, Pip?"

"Yes, Joe."

"'Consequence, my mother and me we ran away from my father several times; and then my mother she'd go out to work, and she'd say, 'Joe,' she'd say, 'now, please God, you shall have some schooling, child,' and she'd put me to school. But my father were that good in his hart that he couldn't abear to be without us. So, he'd come with a most tremenjous crowd and make such a row at the doors of the houses where we was, that they used to be obligated to have no more to do with us and to give us up to him. And then he took us home and hammered us. Which, you see, Pip," said Joe, pausing in his meditative raking of the fire, and looking at me, "were a draw-back on my learning."

"Certainly, poor Joe!"

"Though mind you, Pip," said Joe, with a judicial touch or two of the poker on the top bar, "rendering unto all their doo, and maintaining equal justice betwixt man and man, my father were that good in his hart, don't you see?"

I didn't see; but I didn't say so.

"Well!" Joe pursued, "somebody must keep the pot a-biling, Pip, or the pot won't bile, don't you know?"

I saw that, and said so.

"'Consequence, my father didn't make objections to my going to work; so I went to work at my present calling, which were his too, if he would have followed it, and I worked tolerable hard, I assure *you*, Pip. In time I were able to keep him, and I kep him till he went off in a purple leptic fit. And it were my intentions to have had put upon his tombstone that Whatsume'er the failings on his part. Remember reader he were that good in his hart."

Joe recited this couplet with such manifest pride and careful perspicuity, that I asked him if he had made it himself.

"I made it," said Joe, "my own self. I made it in a moment. It was like striking out a horseshoe complete, in a single blow. I never was so much surprised in all my life—couldn't credit my own ed—to tell you the truth, hardly believed it *were* my own ed. As I was saying, Pip, it were my intentions to have had it cut over him; but poetry costs money, cut it how you will, small or large, and it were not done. Not to mention bearers, all the money that could be spared were wanted for my mother. She were in poor elth, and quite broke. She warent long of following, poor soul, and her share of peace come round at last."

MR. WEMMICK IS MARRIED

I invited Wemmick to come upstairs, and refresh himself with a glass of grog before walking to Walworth. He accepted the invitation. While he was drinking his moderate allowance, he said, with nothing to lead up to it, and after having appeared rather fidgety :

"What do you think of my meaning to take a holiday on Monday, Mr. Pip?"

"Why, I suppose you have not done such a thing these twelve months."

"These twelve years, more likely," said Wemmick.

"Yes, I'm going to take a holiday. More than that; I'm going to take a walk. More than that; I'm going to ask you to take a walk with me."

I was about to excuse myself, as being but a bad companion just then, when Wemmick anticipated me.

"I know your engagements," said he, "and I know you are out of sorts, Mr. Pip. But if you *could* oblige me, I should take it as a kindness. It ain't a long walk, and it's an early one. Say it might occupy you (including breakfast on the walk) from eight to twelve. Couldn't you stretch a point and manage it?"

He had done so much for me at various times, that this was very little to do for him. I said I could manage it—would manage it—and he was so very much pleased by my acquiescence, that I was pleased too. At his particular request, I appointed to call for him at the Castle at half-past eight on Monday morning, and so we parted for the time.

Punctual to my appointment, I rang at the Castle gate on the Monday morning, and was received by Wemmick himself: who struck me as looking tighter

than usual, and having a sleeker hat on. Within, there were two glasses of rum-and-milk prepared, and two biscuits. The Aged must have been stirring with the lark, for, glancing into the perspective of his bedroom, I observed that his bed was empty.

When we had fortified ourselves with the rum-and-milk and biscuits, and were going out for the walk with that training preparation on us, I was considerably surprised to see Wemmick take up a fishing-rod, and put it over his shoulder. "Why, we are not going fishing!" said I. "No," returned Wemmick, "but I like to walk with one."

I thought this odd; however, I said nothing, and we set off. We went towards Camberwell Green, and when we were thereabouts, Wemmick said suddenly:

"Halloa! Here's a church!"

There was nothing very surprising in that; but again, I was rather surprised, when he said, as if he were animated by a brilliant idea:

"Let's go in!"

We went in, Wemmick leaving his fishing-rod in the porch, and looked all round. In the meantime, Wemmick was diving into his coat-pockets, and getting something out of paper there.

"Halloa!" said he. "Here's a couple of pair of gloves! Let's put 'em on!"

As the gloves were white kid gloves, and as the post office was widened to its utmost extent, I now began to have my strong suspicions. They were strengthened into certainty when I beheld the Aged enter at a side door, escorting a lady.

"Halloa!" said Wemmick. "Here's Miss Skiffins! Let's have a wedding."

That discreet damsel was attired as usual, except

that she was now engaged in substituting for her green kid gloves, a pair of white. The Aged was likewise occupied in preparing a similar sacrifice for the altar of Hymen. The old gentleman, however, experienced so much difficulty in getting his gloves on, that Wemmick found it necessary to put him with his back against a pillar, and then to get behind the pillar himself and pull away at them, while I for my part held the old gentleman round the waist, that he might present an equal and safe resistance. By dint of this ingenious scheme, his gloves were got on to perfection.

The clerk and clergyman then appearing, we were ranged in order at those fatal rails. True to his notion of seeming to do it all without preparation, I heard Wemmick say to himself as he took something out of his waistcoat-pocket before the service began, "Halloa ! Here's a ring !"

I acted in the capacity of backer, or best-man, to the bridegroom ; while a little limp pew-opener in a soft bonnet like a baby's, made a feint of being the bosom friend of Miss Skiffins. The responsibility of giving the lady away, devolved upon the Aged, which led to the clergyman's being unintentionally scandalised, and it happened thus. When he said, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man ?" the old gentleman, not in the least knowing what point of the ceremony we had arrived at, stood most amiably beaming at the ten commandments. Upon which, the clergyman said again, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man ?" The old gentleman being still in a state of most estimable unconsciousness, the bridegroom cried out in his accustomed voice, "Now, Aged P., you know ; who giveth ?" To which the Aged replied with great

briskness, before saying that *he* gave, "All right, John, all right, my boy!" And the clergyman came to so gloomy a pause upon it, that I had doubts for the moment whether we should get completely married that day.

It was completely done, however, and when we were going out of church, Wemmick took the cover off the font, and put his white gloves in it, and put the cover on again. Mrs. Wemmick, more heedful of the future, put her white gloves in her pocket and assumed her green. "Now, Mr. Pip," said Wemmick, triumphantly shouldering the fishing-rod as we came out, "let me ask you whether anybody would suppose this to be a wedding-party!"

Breakfast had been ordered at a pleasant little tavern, a mile or so away upon the rising ground beyond the green; and there was a bagatelle board in the room, in case we should desire to unbend our minds after the solemnity. It was pleasant to observe that Mrs. Wemmick no longer unwound Wemmick's arm when it adapted itself to her figure, but sat in a high-backed chair against the wall, like a violoncello in its case, and submitted to be embraced as that melodious instrument might have done.

We had an excellent breakfast, and when any one declined anything on table, Wemmick said, "Provided by contract, you know; don't be afraid of it!" I drank to the new couple, drank to the Aged, drank to the Castle, saluted the bride at parting, and made myself as agreeable as I could.

Wemmick came down to the door with me, and I again shook hands with him, and wished him joy.

"Thankee!" said Wemmick, rubbing his hands. "She's such a manager of fowls, you have no idea. You shall have some eggs and judge for yourself."

I say, Mr. Pip!" calling e back and speaking low.
"This is altogether a Walworth sentiment, please."

"I understand. Not to be mentioned in Little Britain," said I.

Wemmick nodded. "After what you let out the other day, Mr. Jaggers may as well not know of it. He might think my brain was softening, or something of the kind."

A SCENE FROM "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

SCROOGE'S CHRISTMAS DAY

YES! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the time before him was his own, to make amends in!

"I will live in the past, the present, and the future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The spirits of all three shall strive within me. O Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!"

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, "they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here—I am here—the shadows of the thing that would have been,

may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will ! ”

His hands were busy with his garments all this time ; turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

“ I don’t know what to do ! ” cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath, and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. “ I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A Merry Christmas to everybody ! A Happy New Year to all the world. Hollo, here ! Whoop ! Hollo ! ”

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there, perfectly winded.

“ There’s the saucepan that the gruel was in ! ” cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. “ There’s the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered ! There’s the corner where the ghost of Christmas Present sat ! There’s the window where I saw the wandering spirits ! It’s all right, it’s all true, it all happened. Ha, ha, ha ! ”

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs !

“ I don’t know what day of the month it is ! ” said Scrooge. “ I don’t know how long I’ve been among the spirits. I don’t know anything. I’m quite a baby. Never mind. I don’t care. I’d rather be a baby. Hollo ! Whoop ! Hollo, here ! ”

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard.

Clash, clang, hammer ; ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding ; hammer, clang, clash ! Oh, glorious, glorious !

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist ; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold ; cold, piping for the blood to dance to ; golden sunlight ; heavenly sky ; sweet fresh air ; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious !

"What's to-day ?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

"Eh ?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow ?" said Scrooge.

"To-day !" replied the boy. "Why, CHRISTMAS DAY."

"It's Christmas Day !" said Scrooge to himself.

"I haven't missed it. The spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hollo, my fine fellow !"

"Hollo !" returned the boy.

"Do you know the poulterer's in the next street but one, at the corner ?" Scrooge inquired.

"I should hope I did," replied the lad.

"An intelligent boy !" said Scrooge. "A remarkable boy ! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there ?—Not the little prize turkey : the big one ?"

"What, the one as big as me ?" returned the boy.

"What a delightful boy !" said Scrooge. "It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck !"

"It's hanging there now," replied the boy.

"Is it ?" said Scrooge. "Go and buy it."

"Walk-ER !" exclaimed the boy.

"No, no," said Scrooge, "I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half a crown!"

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He shan't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke as sending it to Bob's will be!"

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went downstairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

"I shall love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face. It's a wonderful knocker. Here's the turkey. Hollo! Whoop! How are you? Merry Christmas!"

It *was* a turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute like sticks of sealing-wax.

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said Scrooge. "You must have a cab."

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat

down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled⁷ till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaster over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good-morning, sir. A Merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman who had walked into his counting-house the day before and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?" It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

"My dear sir," said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. "How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A Merry Christmas to you, sir!"

"Mr. Scrooge?"

"Yes," said Scrooge. "That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to

ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness——” here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

“Lord bless me!” cried the gentleman, as if his breath were taken away. “My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?”

“If you please,” said Scrooge. “Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?”

“My dear sir,” said the other, shaking hands with him. “I don’t know what to say to such munifi——”

“Don’t say anything, please,” retorted Scrooge. “Come and see me. Will you come and see me?”

“I will!” cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

“Thank’ee,” said Scrooge. “I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!”

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows; and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk—that anything—could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew’s house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it.

“Is your master at home, my dear?” said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

“Yes, sir.”

“Where is he, my love?” said Scrooge.

“He’s in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I’ll show you upstairs, if you please.”

SCENE FROM "A CHRISTMAS CAROL" 129

"Thank'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. "I'll go in here, my dear."

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great array); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

"Fred!" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

"Why, bless my soul!" cried Fred, "who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump sister when *she* came. So did every one when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the tank.

His hat was off before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy;

driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hollo!" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I *am* behind my time."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes. I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, appearing from the tank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge; "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the tank again—"and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it, holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait waistcoat.

"A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year. I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not

die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed; and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with spirits, but lived upon the total abstinence principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us every one!

A SCENE FROM "BARNABY RUDGE"

THE GORDON RIOTS

It was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon when the three great parties met at Westminster, and, uniting into one huge mass, raised a tremendous shout. This was not only done in token of their presence, but as a signal to those on whom the task devolved that it was time to take possession of the

lobbies of both Houses, and of the various avenues of approach, and of the gallery stairs. To the last-named place Hugh and Dennis, still with their pupil between them, rushed straightway ; Barnaby having given his flag into the hands of one of their own party, who kept them at the outer door. Their followers pressing on behind, they were borne as on a great wave to the very doors of the gallery, whence it was impossible to retreat, even if they had been so inclined, by reason of the throng which choked up the passages. It is a familiar expression in describing a great crowd, that a person might have walked upon the people's heads. In this case it was actually done ; for a boy who had by some means got among the concourse, and was in imminent danger of suffocation, climbed to the shoulders of a man beside him, and walked upon the people's hats and heads into the open street, traversing in his passage the whole length of two staircases and a long gallery. Nor was the swarm without less dense ; for a basket, which had been tossed into the crowd, was jerked from head to head, and shoulder to shoulder, and went spinning and whirling on above them, until it was lost to view, without ever once falling in among them or coming near the ground.

Through this vast throng, sprinkled, doubtless, here and there with honest zealots, but composed for the most part of the very scum and refuse of London, whose growth was fostered by bad criminal laws, bad prison regulations, and the worst conceivable police, such of the members of both Houses of Parliament as had not taken the precaution to be already at their posts, were compelled to fight and force their way. Their carriages were stopped and broken ; the wheels wrenched off, the glasses shattered to atoms,

the panels beaten in ; drivers, footmen, and masters pulled from their seats and rolled in the mud. Lords, commoners, and reverend bishops, with little distinction of person or party, were kicked and pinched and hustled, passed from hand to hand through various stages of ill-usage, and sent to their fellow-senators at last with their clothes hanging in ribbons about them, their bag-wigs torn off, themselves speechless and breathless, and their persons covered with the powder which had been cuffed and beaten out of their hair. One lord was so long in the hands of the populace that the peers as a body resolved to sally forth and rescue him, and were in the act of doing so, when he happily appeared among them covered with dirt and bruises, and hardly to be recognised by those who knew him best. The noise and uproar were on the increase every moment. The air was filled with execrations, hoots, and howlings. The mob raged and roared, like a mad monster as it was, unceasingly, and each new outrage served to swell its fury.

Within doors matters were even yet more threatening. Lord George—preceded by a man who carried the immense petition on a porter's knot through the lobby to the door of the House of Commons, where it was received by two officers of the House, who rolled it up to the table ready for presentation—had taken his seat at an early hour, before the Speaker went to prayers. His followers pouring in at the same time, the lobby and all the avenues were immediately filled, as we have seen. Thus the members were not only attacked in their passage through the streets, but were set upon within the very walls of Parliament ; while the tumult, both within and without, was so great, that those who attempted to speak could scarcely hear their own voices, far less consult upon

the course it would be wise to take in such extremity, or animate each other to dignified and firm resistance. So sure as any member, just arrived, with dress disordered and dishevelled hair, came struggling through the crowd in the lobby, it yelled and screamed in triumph; and when the door of the House, partially and cautiously opened by those within for his admission, gave them a momentary glimpse of the interior, they grew more wild and savage, like beasts at the sight of prey, and made a rush against the portal which strained its locks and bolts in their staples, and shook the very beams.

The strangers' gallery, which was immediately above the door of the House, had been ordered to be closed on the first rumour of disturbance, and was empty, save that now and then Lord George took his seat there, for the convenience of coming to the head of the stairs which led to it, and repeating to the people what had passed within. It was on these stairs that Barnaby, Hugh, and Dennis were posted. There were two flights, short, steep, and narrow, running parallel to each other, and leading to two little doors communicating with the low passage which opened on the gallery. Between them was a kind of well, or unglazed skylight, for the admission of light and air into the lobby, which might be some eighteen or twenty feet below.

Upon one of these little staircases—not that at the head of which Lord George appeared from time to time, but the other—Gashford stood with his elbow on the banister, and his cheek resting on his hand, with his usual crafty aspect. Whenever he varied the attitude in the slightest degree—so much as by the gentlest motion of his arm—the uproar was certain to increase, not merely there, but in the

lobby below ; from which place, no doubt, some man who acted as fugleman to the rest was constantly looking up and watching him.

"Order !" cried Hugh, in a voice which made itself heard even above the roar and tumult, as Lord George appeared at the top of the staircase. "News ! News from my lord !"

The noise continued, notwithstanding his appearance, until Gashford looked round. There was silence immediately—even among the people in the passages without, and on the other staircases, who could neither see nor hear, but to whom, notwithstanding, the signal was conveyed with marvellous rapidity.

"Gentlemen," said Lord George, who was very pale and agitated, "we must be firm. They talk of delays, but we must have no delays. They talk of taking your petition into consideration next Tuesday, but we must have it considered now. Present appearances look bad for our success, but we must succeed, and will !"

"We must succeed, and will !" echoed the crowd. And so among their shouts and cheers and other cries, he bowed to them and retired, and presently came back again. There was another gesture from Gashford, and a dead silence directly.

"I am afraid," he said this time, "that we have little reason, gentlemen, to hope for any redress from the proceedings of Parliament. But we must redress our own grievances, we must meet again, we must put our trust in Providence, and it will bless our endeavours."

This speech, being a little more temperate than the last, was not so favourably received. When the noise and exasperation were at their height, he came back once more, and told them that the alarm had

gone forth for many miles round; that when the King heard of their assembling together in that great body, he had no doubt his Majesty would send down private orders to have their wishes complied with; and—with the manner of his speech as childish, irresolute, and uncertain as his matter—was proceeding further, when two gentlemen suddenly appeared at the door where he stood, and pressing past him, and coming a step or two lower down upon the stairs, confronted the people.

The boldness of this action quite took them by surprise. They were not the less disconcerted when one of the gentlemen, turning to Lord George, spoke thus—in a loud voice that they might hear him well, but quite coolly and collectedly—

“You may tell these people, if you please, my lord, that I am General Conway, of whom they have heard; and that I oppose this petition and all their proceedings, and yours. I am a soldier, you may tell them, and I will protect the freedom of this place with my sword. You see, my lord, that the members of this House are all in arms to-day; you know that the entrance to it is a narrow one; you cannot be ignorant that there are men within these walls who are determined to defend that pass to the last, and before whom many lives must fall if your adherents persevere. Have a care what you do.”

“And, my Lord George,” said the other gentleman, addressing him in like manner, “I desire them to hear this, from me—Colonel Gordon—your near relation. If a man among this crowd, whose uproar strikes us deaf, crosses the threshold of the House of Commons, I swear to run my sword that moment—not into his, but into your body!”

With that, they stepped back again, keeping their faces towards the crowd, took each an arm of the misguided nobleman, drew him into the passage, and shut the door; which they directly locked and fastened on the inside.

This was so quickly done, and the demeanour of both gentlemen—who were not young men, either—was so gallant and resolute, that the crowd faltered and stared at each other with irresolute and timid looks. Many tried to turn towards the door; some of the faintest-hearted cried they had best go back, and called to those behind to give way, and the panic and confusion were increasing rapidly, when Gashford whispered Hugh.

"What now!" Hugh roared aloud, turning towards them. "Why go back? Where can you do better than here, boys? One good rush against these doors and one below at the same time, will do the business. Rush on, then! As to the door below, let those stand back who are afraid. Let those who are not afraid try who shall be the first to pass it. Here goes! Look out down there!"

Without the delay of an instant, he threw himself headlong over the banisters into the lobby below. He had hardly touched the ground when Barnaby was at his side. The chaplain's assistant, and some members who were imploring the people to retire, immediately withdrew; and then with a great shout both crowds threw themselves against the doors pell-mell, and besieged the House in earnest.

At that moment, when a second onset must have brought them into collision with those who stood on the defensive within, in which case great loss of life and bloodshed would inevitably have ensued—the hindmost portion of the crowd gave way, and the

rumour spread from mouth to mouth that a messenger had been despatched by water for the military, who were forming in the street. Fearful of sustaining a charge in the narrow passages in which they were so closely wedged together, the throng poured out as impetuously as they had flocked in. As the whole stream turned at once, Barnaby and Hugh went with it; and so, fighting and struggling and trampling on fallen men, and being trampled on in turn themselves, they and the whole mass floated by degrees into the open street, where a large detachment of the Guards, both horse and foot, came hurrying up, clearing the ground before them so rapidly that the people seemed to melt away as they advanced.

The word of command to halt being given, the soldiers formed across the street; the rioters, breathless and exhausted with their late exertions, formed likewise, though in a very irregular and disorderly manner. The commanding officer rode hastily into the open space between the two bodies, accompanied by a magistrate and an officer of the House of Commons, for whose accommodation a couple of troopers had hastily dismounted. The Riot Act was read, but not a man stirred.

In the first rank of the insurgents, Barnaby and Hugh stood side by side. Somebody had thrust into Barnaby's hands when he came out into the street his precious flag; which, being now rolled up and tied round the pole, looked like a giant quarter-staff as he grasped it firmly and stood upon his guard. If ever man believed with his whole heart and soul that he was engaged in a just cause, and that he was bound to stand by his leader to the last, poor Barnaby believed it of himself and Lord George Gordon.

After an ineffectual attempt to make himself

heard, the magistrate gave the word, and the Horse Guards came riding in among the crowd. But, even then, he galloped here and there, exhorting the people to disperse; and, although heavy stones were thrown at the men, and some were desperately cut and bruised, they had no orders but to make prisoners of such of the rioters as were the most active, and to drive the people back with the flat of their sabres. As the horses came in among them, the throng gave way at many points; and the Guards, following up their advantage, were rapidly clearing the ground, when two or three of the foremost, who were in a manner cut off from the rest by the people closing round them, made straight towards Barnaby and Hugh, who had no doubt been pointed out as the two men who dropped into the lobby, laying about them now with some effect, and inflicting on the more turbulent of their opponents a few slight flesh wounds, under the influence of which a man dropped, here and there, into the arms of his fellows, amid much groaning and confusion.

At the sight of gashed and bloody faces, seen for a moment in the crowd, then hidden by the press around them, Barnaby turned pale and sick. But he stood his ground, and, grasping his pole more firmly yet, kept his eye fixed upon the nearest soldier—nodding his head meanwhile as Hugh, with a scowling visage, whispered in his ear.

The soldier came spurring on, making his horse rear as the people pressed about him, cutting at the hands of those who would have grasped his rein and forced his charger back, and waving to his comrades to follow; and still Barnaby, without retreating an inch, waited for his coming. Some called to him to fly, and some were in the very act of closing round him

to prevent his being taken, when the pole swept into the air above the people's heads, and the man's saddle was empty in an instant.

Then he and Hugh turned and fled, the crowd opening to let them pass, and closing up again so quickly that there was no clue to the course they had taken. Panting for breath, hot, dusty, and exhausted with fatigue, they reached the river-side in safety, and getting into a boat with all despatch, were soon out of any immediate danger.

As they glided down the river, they plainly heard the people cheering; and supposing they might have forced the soldiers to retreat, lay upon their oars for a few minutes, uncertain whether to return or not. But the crowd passing along Westminster Bridge soon assured them that the populace were dispersing; and Hugh rightly guessed from this that they had cheered the magistrate for offering to dismiss the military on condition of their immediate departure to their several homes, and that he and Barnaby were better where they were. He advised, therefore, that they should proceed to Blackfriars, and, going ashore at the bridge, make the best of their way to the "Boot"; where there was not only good entertainment and safe lodging, but where they would certainly be joined by many of their late companions.

They landed at a critical time, and, fortunately for themselves, at the right moment. For, coming into Fleet Street, they found it in an unusual stir; and inquiring the cause, were told that a body of Horse Guards had just galloped past, and that they were escorting some rioters whom they had made prisoners to Newgate for safety. Not at all ill-pleased to have so narrowly escaped the cavalcade, they lost no more time in asking questions, but hurried

to the "Boot" with as much speed as Hugh considered it prudent to make, without appearing singular or attracting an inconvenient share of public notice.

A SCENE FROM "A TALE OF TWO CITIES"

A DEED OF HEROISM

IN the black prison of the Conciergerie, the doomed of the day awaited their fate. They were in number as the weeks of the year. Fifty-two were to roll that afternoon on the life-tide of the city to the boundless everlasting sea. Before their cells were quit of them, new occupants were appointed; before their blood ran into the blood spilled yesterday, the blood that was to mingle with theirs to-morrow was already set apart.

Two score and twelve were told off. From the farmer-general of seventy, whose riches could not buy his life, to the seamstress of twenty, whose poverty and obscurity could not save her. Physical diseases, engendered in the vices and neglects of men, will seize on victims of all degrees; and the frightful moral disorder, born of unspeakable suffering, intolerable oppression, and heartless indifference, smote equally without distinction.

Charles Darnay, alone in a cell, had sustained himself with no flattering delusion since he came to it from the Tribunal. In every line of the narrative he had heard, he had heard his condemnation. He had fully comprehended that no personal influence

could possibly save him, that he was virtually sentenced by the millions, and that units could avail him nothing.

Nevertheless, it was not easy, with the face of his beloved wife fresh before him, to compose his mind to what it must bear. His hold on life was strong, and it was very, very hard to loosen; by gradual efforts and degrees unclosed a little here, it clenched the tighter there; and when he brought his strength to bear on that hand and it yielded, this was closed again. There was a hurry, too, in all his thoughts, a turbulent and heated working of his heart, that contended against resignation. If, for a moment, he did feel resigned, then his wife and child who had to live after him, seemed to protest and to make it a selfish thing.

But, all this was at first. Before long, the consideration that there was no disgrace in the fate he must meet, and that numbers went the same road wrongfully, and trod it firmly, every day, sprang up to stimulate him. Next followed the thought that much of the future peace of mind enjoyable by the dear ones, depended on his quiet fortitude. So, by degrees he calmed into the better state, when he could raise his thoughts much higher, and draw comfort down.

Before it had set in dark on the night of his condemnation, he had travelled thus far on his last way. Being allowed to purchase the means of writing, and a light, he sat down to write until such time as the prison lamps should be extinguished.

He wrote a long letter to Lucie, showing her that he had known nothing of her father's imprisonment until he had heard of it from herself, and that he had been as ignorant as she of his father's and uncle's

responsibility for that misery until the paper had been read. He had already explained to her that his concealment from herself of the name he had relinquished, was the one condition—fully intelligible now—that her father had attached to their betrothal, and was the one promise he had still exacted on the morning of their marriage. He entreated her, for her father's sake, never to seek to know whether her father had become oblivious of the existence of the paper, or had had it recalled to him (for the moment, or for good) by the story of the Tower, on that old Sunday under the dear plane-tree in the garden. If he had preserved any definite remembrance of it, there could be no doubt that he had supposed it destroyed with the Bastille, when he had found no mention of it among the relics of prisoners which the populace had discovered there, and which had been described to all the world. He besought her—though he added that he knew it was needless—to console her father, by impressing him through every tender means she could think of, with the truth that he had done nothing for which he could justly reproach himself, but had uniformly forgotten himself for their joint sakes. Next to her preservation of his own last grateful love and blessing, and her overcoming of her sorrow, to devote herself to their dear child, he adjured her, as they would meet in heaven, to comfort her father.

To her father himself, he wrote in the same strain; but he told her father that he expressly confided his wife and child to his care. And he told him this, very strongly, with the hope of rousing him from any despondency or dangerous retrospect towards which he foresaw he might be tending.

To Mr. Lorry, he commended them all, and

explained his worldly affairs. That done, with many added sentences of grateful friendship and warm attachment, all was done. He never thought of Carton. His mind was so full of the others, that he never once thought of him.

He had time to finish these letters before the lights were put out. When he lay down on his straw bed, he thought he had done with this world.

But it beckoned him back in his sleep, and showed itself in shining forms. Free and happy, back in the old house in Soho (though it had nothing in it like the real house), unaccountably released and light of heart, he was with Lucie again, and she told him it was all a dream, and he had never gone away. A pause of forgetfulness, and then he had even suffered, and had come back to her, dead and at peace, and yet there was no difference in her. Another pause of oblivion, and he awoke in the sombre morning, unconscious where he was or what had happened, until it flashed upon his mind, "This is the day of my death!"

Thus had he come through the hours, to the day when the fifty-two heads were to fall. And now, while he was composed, and hoped that he could meet the end with quiet heroism, a new action began in his waking thoughts, which was very difficult to master.

He had never seen the instrument that was to terminate his life. How high it was from the ground, how many steps it had, where he would be stood, how he would be touched, whether the touching hands would be dyed red, which way his face would be turned, whether he would be the first, or might be the last: these and many similar questions, in no wise directed by his will, obtruded themselves over

and over again, countless times. Neither were they connected with fear: he was conscious of no fear. Rather, they originated in a strange besetting desire to know what to do when the time came; a desire gigantically disproportionate to the few swift moments to which it referred; a wondering that was more like the wondering of some other spirit within his, than his own.

The hours went on as he walked to and fro, and the clocks struck the numbers he would never hear again. Nine gone for ever, ten gone for ever, eleven gone for ever, twelve coming on to pass away. After a hard contest with that eccentric action of thought which had last perplexed him, he had got the better of it. He walked up and down, softly repeating their names to himself. The worst of the strife was over. He could walk up and down, free from distracting fancies, praying for himself and for them.

Twelve gone for ever.

He had been apprised that the final hour was three, and he knew he would be summoned some time earlier, inasmuch as the tumbrils jolted heavily and slowly through the streets. Therefore, he resolved to keep two before his mind, as the hour, and so to strengthen himself in the interval that he might be able, after that time, to strengthen others.

Walking regularly to and fro with his arms folded on his breast, a very different man from the prisoner who had walked to and fro at La Force, he heard one struck away from him, without surprise. The hour had measured like most other hours. Devoutly thankful to Heaven for his recovered self-possession, he thought, "There is but another now," and turned to walk again.

Footsteps in the stone passage, outside the door. He stopped.

The key was put in the lock, and turned. Before the door was opened, or as it opened, a man said in a low voice, in English, "He has never seen me here; I have kept out of his way. Go you in alone; I wait near. Lose no time!"

The door was quickly opened and closed, and there stood before him, face to face, quiet, intent upon him, with the light of a smile on his features and a cautionary finger on his lip, Sydney Carton.

There was something so bright and remarkable in his look, that, for the first moment, the prisoner misdoubted him to be an apparition of his own imagining. But he spoke, and it was his voice; he took the prisoner's hand, and it was his real grasp.

"Of all the people upon earth, you least expected to see me?" he said.

"I could not believe it to be you. I can scarcely believe it now. You are not"—the apprehension came suddenly into his mind—"a prisoner?"

"No. I am accidentally possessed of a power over one of the keepers here, and in virtue of it I stand before you. I come from her—your wife, dear Darnay."

The prisoner wrung his hand.

"I bring you a request from her."

"What is it?"

"A most earnest, pressing, and emphatic entreaty, addressed to you in the most pathetic tones of the voice so dear to you, that you well remember."

The prisoner turned his face partly aside.

"You have no time to ask me why I bring it, or what it means; I have no time to tell you. You

must comply with it—take off those boots you wear, and draw on these of mine."

There was a chair against the wall of the cell, behind the prisoner. Carton, pressing forward, had already, with the speed of lightning, got him down into it, and stood over him barefoot.

"Draw on these boots of mine. Put your hands to them; put your will to them. Quick!"

"Carton, there is no escaping from this place; it never can be done. You will only die with me. It is madness."

"It would be madness if I asked you to escape; but do I? When I ask you to pass out at that door, tell me it is madness and remain here. Change that cravat for this of mine, that coat for this of mine. While you do it, let me take this ribbon from your hair, and shake out your hair like this of mine!"

With wonderful quickness, and with a strength, both of will and action, that appeared quite supernatural, he forced all these changes upon him. The prisoner was like a young child in his hands.

"Carton! Dear Carton! It is madness. It cannot be accomplished, it never can be done, it has been attempted, and has always failed. I implore you not to add your death to the bitterness of mine."

"Do I ask you, my dear Darnay, to pass the door? When I ask you that, refuse. There are pen and ink and paper on this table. Is your hand steady enough to write?"

"It was, when you came in."

"Steady it again, and write what I shall dictate. Quick, friend, quick!"

Pressing his hand to his bewildered head, Darnay sat down at the table. Carton, with his right hand in his breast, stood close beside him.

"Write exactly as I speak."

"To whom do I address it?"

"To no one." Carton still had his hand in his breast.

"Do I date it?"

"No."

The prisoner looked up, at each question. Carton, standing over him with his hand in his breast, looked down.

"If you remember," said Carton, dictating, "the words that passed between us, long ago, you will readily comprehend this when you see it. You do remember them, I know. It is not in your nature to forget them."

He was drawing his hand from his breast; the prisoner chancing to look up in his hurried wonder as he wrote, the hand stopped, closing upon something.

"Have you written 'forget them?'" Carton asked.

"I have. Is that a weapon in your hand?"

"No; I am not armed."

"What is it in your hand?"

"You shall know directly. Write on; there are but a few words more." He dictated again. "'I am thankful that the time has come when I can prove them. That I do so is no subject for regret or grief.'" As he said these words, with his eyes fixed on the writer, his hand slowly and softly moved down close to the writer's face.

The pen dropped from Darnay's fingers on the table, and he looked about him vacantly.

"What vapour is that?" he asked.

"Vapour?"

"Something that crossed me?"

"I am conscious of nothing; there can be nothing here. Take up the pen and finish. Hurry, hurry!"

As if his memory were impaired, or his faculties disordered, the prisoner made an effort to rally his attention. As he looked at Carton with clouded eyes and with an altered manner of breathing, Carton—his hand again in his breast—looked steadily at him.

"Hurry, hurry!"

The prisoner bent over the paper once more.

"If it had been otherwise"—Carton's hand was again watchfully and softly stealing down—"I never should have used the longer opportunity. If it had been otherwise"—the hand was at the prisoner's face—"I should but have had so much the more to answer for. If it had been otherwise——" Carton looked at the pen, and saw that it was trailing off into unintelligible signs.

Carton's hand moved back to his breast no more. The prisoner sprang up, with a reproachful look, but Carton's hand was close and firm at his nostrils, and Carton's left arm caught him round the waist. For a few seconds he faintly struggled with the man who had come to lay down his life for him; but within a minute or so, he was stretched insensible on the ground.

Quickly, but with hands as true to the purpose as his heart was, Carton dressed himself in the clothes the prisoner had laid aside, combed back his hair, and tied it with the ribbon the prisoner had worn. Then he softly called, "Enter there! Come in!" and the spy presented himself.

"You see?" said Carton, looking up, as he

kneeled on one knee beside the insensible figure, putting the paper in the breast; "is your hazard very great?"

"Mr. Carton," the spy answered, with a tinid snap of his fingers, "my hazard is not *that*, in the thick of business here, if you are true to the whole of your bargain."

"Don't fear me. I will be true to the death."

"You must be, Mr. Carton, if the tale of fifty-two is to be right. Being made right by you in that dress, I shall have no fear."

"Have no fear! I shall soon be out of the way of harming you, and the rest will soon be far from here, please God! Now, get assistance and take me to the coach."

"You?" said the spy nervously.

"Him, man, with whom I have exchanged. You go out at the gate by which you brought me in?"

"Of course."

"I was weak and faint when you brought me in, and I am fainter now you take me out. The parting interview has overpowered me. Such a thing has happened here often, and too often. Your life is in your own hands. Quick! Call assistance!"

"You swear not to betray me?" said the trembling spy, as he paused for a last moment.

"Man, man!" returned Carton, stamping his foot; "have I sworn by no solemn vow already, to go through with this, that you waste the precious moments now? Take him yourself to the courtyard you know of, place him yourself in the carriage, show him yourself to Mr. Lorry, tell him yourself to give him no restorative but air, and to remember my words of last night and his promise of last night, and drive away!"

The spy withdrew, and Carton seated himself at the table, resting his forehead on his hands. The spy returned immediately, with two men.

"How, then?" said one of them, contemplating the fallen figure. "So afflicted to find that his friend has drawn a prize in the lottery of Saint Guillotine?"

"A good patriot," said the other, "could hardly have been more afflicted if the aristocrat had drawn a blank."

They raised the unconscious figure, placed it on a litter they had brought to the door, and bent to carry it away.

"The time is short, Evrémonde," said the spy, in a warning voice.

"I know it well," answered Carton. "Be careful of my friend, I entreat you, and leave me."

"Come, then, my children," said Barsad. "Lift him, and come away!"

The door closed, and Carton was left alone. Straining his powers of listening to the utmost, he listened for any sound that might denote suspicion or alarm. There was none. Keys turned, doors clashed, footsteps passed along distant passages: no cry was raised, or hurry made, that seemed unusual. Breathing more freely in a little while, he sat down at the table, and listened again until the clocks struck two.

Sounds that he was not afraid of, for he divined their meaning, then began to be audible. Several doors were opened in succession, and finally his own. A jailer, with a list in his hand, looked in, merely saying, "Follow me, Evrémonde!" and he followed into a large dark room, at a distance. It was a dark winter day, and what with the shadows within, and

what with the shadows without, he could but dimly discern the others who were brought there to have their arms bound. Some were standing; some seated. Some were lamenting, and in restless motion; but these were few. The great majority were silent and still, looking fixedly at the ground.

As he stood by the wall in a dim corner, while some of the fifty-two were brought in after him, one man stopped in passing, to embrace him, as having a knowledge of him. It thrilled him with a great dread of discovery; but the man went on. A very few moments after that, a young woman, with a slight girlish form, a sweet spare face in which there was no vestige of colour, and large, widely-opened, patient eyes, rose from the seat where he had observed her sitting, and came to speak to him.

"Citizen Evrémonde," she said, touching him with her cold hand. "I am a poor little seamstress, who was with you in La Force."

He murmured for answer: "True. I forget what you were accused of?"

"Plots. Though the just Heaven knows I am innocent of any. Is it likely? Who would think of plotting with a poor little weak creature like me?"

The forlorn smile with which she said it, so touched him, that tears started from his eyes.

"I am not afraid to die, Citizen Evrémonde, but I have done nothing. I am not unwilling to die, if the Republic which is to do so much good to us poor, will profit by my death; but I do not know how that can be, Citizen Evrémonde. Such a poor weak little creature!"

As the last thing on earth that his heart was to warm and soften to, it warmed and softened to this pitiable girl.

"I heard you were released, Citizen Evrémonde. I hoped it was true?"

"It was. But I was again taken and condemned."

"If I may ride with you, Citizen Evrémonde, will you let me hold your hand? I am not afraid, but I am little and weak, and it will give me more courage."

As the patient eyes were lifted to his face, he saw a sudden doubt in them, and then astonishment. He pressed the work-worn, hunger-worn young fingers, and touched his lips.

"Are you dying for him?" she whispered.

"And his wife and child. Hush! Yes."

"Oh, you will let me hold your brave hand, stranger?"

"Hush! Yes, my poor sister; to the last."

NOTES TO "SELECTIONS FROM DICKENS "

David Copperfield

Page 1, l. 3. **South Foreland Light.** A headland in Kent, four miles N.E. of Dover, with a lighthouse upon it.

Page 1, l. 11. **Jocose.** Facetious, full of jests.

Page 3, l. 27. **Disconsolately.** In a dejected manner.

Page 6, l. 14. **Minute-guns.** Guns fired at intervals of a minute.

Page 9, l. 4. **Mr. Creakle.** A schoolmaster who figures in "David Copperfield."

Page 9, l. 22. **Protégées ;** i.e. one who is taken under the care or protection of another.

Page 9, l. 25. **Abjuration.** A solemn renunciation or giving up of something.

Page 9, l. 31. **Inviolable**=not to be profaned ; sacred.

Page 10, l. 14. **Precincts**=the ground surrounding a place of worship (sometimes consecrated), here figuratively applied to Miss Betsey Trotwood's garden.

Page 12, l. 26. **Lee walls**=walls sheltered from the wind.

Page 15, l. 3. **Ham.** A young fisherman with whose family David had stayed as a boy at Yarmouth.

Page 15, l. 21. **Roads.** The well-known Yarmouth Roads, an anchorage for ships.

Page 16, l. 7. **Without any effort of my volition ;** i.e. without any conscious act of his mind.

Page 17, l. 14. **Lethargy.** Literally forgetfulness—a condition of torpor or inertness.

Page 17, l. 17. **Gazetteer.** Newspaper, gazette.

Page 25, l. 22. **I saw him lying.** This was Steerforth, an old schoolfellow, and friend of David Copperfield.

Pickwick

Page 28, l. 33. **Spasmodic.** Jerky ; by fits and starts.

Page 31, l. 14. **Expedition.** Speed.

Page 32, l. 33. **Adjuration.** Earnest appeal.

Page 33, l. 30. **Phenomenon.** Appearance.

Page 34, l. 3. **Snodgrass, Tupman and Winkle** were fellow members of the Pickwick Club.

Page 36, l. 34. **The ribbons ;** i.e. the reins.

Page 39, l. 25. **Turnpike.** Toll-gate; at one time money for the upkeep of roads was raised by making all vehicles pay a toll, and this was collected when passing through the toll-gate.

Page 40, l. 3. **Retrograde**=backward.

Page 40, l. 34. **Quickset.** A hedge of thorn.

Page 42, l. 27. **Auricular organ**; i.e. ear. "Auricula" means a little ear.

Page 44, l. 24. **Ablutions.** The act of washing.

Martin Chuzzlewit

Page 51, l. 31. **Platonic basket**; i.e. the gift of the basket implied nothing more than friendship.

Page 52, l. 30. **Wold.** Open rolling country.

Page 53, l. 24. **Dowager**=a title given to a widow to distinguish her from the wife of her husband's heir bearing the same name. The Dowager Duchess of —.

Page 56, l. 14. **Billeting.** To quarter or place in lodgings, as soldiers in private houses; from "billet," a ticket.

Page 58, l. 8. **Furnival's Inn.** Formerly an Inn of Chancery, a building on the north side of Holborn. Charles Dickens lived there.

Page 59, l. 4. **Chiffonier.** A piece of furniture consisting of a small cupboard with the top made so as to act as a sideboard.

Page 71, l. 17. **Austin Friars.** This district of London takes its name from the monastery of the Augustinian friars which was in Broad Street.

Page 75, l. 17. **Wafer-stamp.** A seal for stamping wafers which were formerly used to secure letters.

Page 76, l. 19. **The Temple.** Originally the habitation of the Knights Templar, now one of the Inns of Court off Fleet Street.

Page 76, l. 28. **Temple Gate, or Temple Bar.** The boundary between the city of London and the city of Westminster, situate at the junction of Fleet Street and the Strand. The gate was removed in 1878, and the site is marked by a monument.

Page 81, l. 30. **Islington.** A district in North London.

Page 82, l. 25. **Mountebank.** A strolling actor or tumbler; here used to describe the shaky nature of the forks.

Page 82, l. 30. **Garniture.** Adornment; decoration.

Page 83, l. 28. **Dragon Mark**; i.e. Mark Tapley, who was employed at the Blue Dragon.

Page 84, l. 22. **Loquacious.** Talkative.

Page 87, l. 20. **America.** See the Introduction. Dickens denounced slavery very freely whilst in America.

Page 90, l. 24. **Floored.** Laid low with illness.

Page 91, l. 1. **Plethoric.** Of ample size and roundness.

Nicholas Nickleby

Page 93, l. 1. **Godalming.** A town in Surrey not far from Guildford, near the Portsmouth Road.

Page 93, l. 15. **Devil's Punch Bowl.** A large grassy cavity in one of the wooded hills of Hindhead. For similar names, cp. the Devil's Dyke, the Devil's Frying Pan.

Page 99, l. 14. **Inexpressibles.** A Mid-Victorian politeness² for trousers.

Page 100, l. 30. **Descanted.** To discourse with fullness and particularity—especially of familiar subjects.

Page 102, l. 2. **Apothecary in "Romeo and Juliet."** For a description of the Apothecary, cp. Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," Act V. Scene I.—

"Famine is in thy cheeks ;

Need and oppression stareth in thine eyes ;

Contempt and beggary hangs upon thy back."

Page 102, l. 6. **Front grooves O.P.** The "grooves" are the supports for the wings and flats, parts of the scenery employed in a theatre.

O.P. ; *i.e.* opposite Prompt. The prompt side of the stage is the right hand side as it appears to the audience.

Great Expectations

Page 114, l. 12. **Mark Antony's Oration.** See Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar," Act III. Scene II. The well-known speech beginning "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears."

Page 114, l. 14. **Collins' Ode on the Passions.** William Collins, an English poet, born in 1721. His best-known works are the Persian Eclogues and the Odes. Dickens refers below to the lines—

"But with a frown

Revenge impatient rose :

He threw his blood-stained sword in thunder down,

And with a withering look

The war-denouncing trumpet took."

Page 115, l. 12. **Purblind.** As if nearly blind.

Page 120, l. 14. **Camberwell Green.** Camberwell is a district in South London.

Page 123, l. 2. **Walworth sentiment ;** *i.e.* a secret. Walworth is a district in South London, and Little Britain lies between Christ's Hospital and Aldersgate Street.

Christmas Carol

Page 124, l. 8. **Making a perfect Laocoön of himself ;** *i.e.* struggling with his stockings. Laocoön was a Trojan priest, who with his two sons was crushed to death by serpents. Virgil recounts his death in the "Aeneid." A group representing the struggles of Laocoön with the serpents was discovered at Rome, and is one of the best-known specimens of Hellenistic sculpture.

Barnaby Rudge

Page 131, l. 23. **The Gordon Riots.** A bill was passed in 1778 for the relief of Roman Catholics from certain disabilities, and Lord George Gordon, the member for Ludgershall in Wiltshire as president of a Protestant association, on the 2nd June, 1780, headed a mob of 50,000 persons who marched in procession to the House of Commons

to present a petition for its repeal. Serious riots ensued for five days, during which much damage was done to property and Newgate prison, and the house of the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, was destroyed. On the 7th the troops were called out and suppressed the riots. Lord George was tried for high treason, but was acquitted.

Page 133, l. 8. **Bag-wig.** Wigs which had the back hair tucked away in a little pouch or bag.

Page 135, l. 2. **Fugleman**, or **flugelman**. Literally the leader of a file, a soldier specially expert and well-drilled, formerly placed in front of a company as an example to the others in their drill.

Page 136, l. 17. **General Conway.** Henry Seymour Conway (1721—1795), a well-known soldier and politician, subsequently a field marshal.

Page 138, l. 23. **The Riot Act was read.** The Riot Act, which was passed in 1715, enacted that, when an unlawful assembly of twelve or more persons did not disperse within an hour of the proclamation calling on them to do so being read by a magistrate, they became guilty of a felony, and any one who after the lapse of the hour was obliged to use violence to disperse them was indemnified. The rioting of the first five days was partly due to the fact that no one dared to use force against the mob unless a magistrate was present and had "read the Riot Act."

Page 140, l. 33. **Newgate.** The prison takes its name from this gate, the western gate of London by which Watling Street left the city.

Tale of Two Cities

Page 141, l. 7. **Conciergerie.** The old prison of the Palais de Justice in Paris.

Page 141, l. 17. **Farmer-general**=one who under the old French monarchy "farmed" the taxes of a particular district.

Page 141, l. 27. **Tribunal.** Court of Justice, where Charles Darney was tried. "Extra-ordinary Tribunals" were established in France in 1793, and during the Revolution the trials of prisoners were conducted there in a very summary way.

Page 143, l. 15. **Bastille.** A State prison in Paris, stormed by the mob in July 14, 1789.

Page 145, l. 22. **Tumbrils.** A rough cart with two wheels, used to convey prisoners to the place of execution.

Page 145, l. 30. **La Force.** An ancient prison in Paris, the oldest parts of which were built in 1265. It was much used during the French Revolution.

THE END

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